

The NUM is calling upon the TUC to demand that the "next Labour government" should "immediately legislate" for a review of all cases of miners sacked and imprisoned, act to reinstate all sacked, and to reimburse all monies taken by the courts during the miners' strike.

## Kinnock is no answer

NO CLASS CONSCIOUS worker should oppose the NUM motion to the TUC. A Labour government should immediately release from prison all miners and their supporters who are still incarcerated, all those sacked should be reinstated in their old jobs with full compensation, and of course the NUM must be paid back the money legally robbed from it by the courts.

But surely we should be demanding the same from Thatcher's Tory government today? Why should we wait nearly two years before the miners and the NUM receive justice, let alone revenge? What if Labour is not elected? And if it is can we trust Kinnock to deliver the goods?

The truth is that the motion is sidestepping the responsibility the leadership of the NUM has to launch a mass campaign, which would have to include industrial action, to achieve its legitimate demands. The NUM leadership while still blindly though nonetheless determinedly insisting that there has been no defeat is retreating from the very militancy which saw the miners through the twelve bitter but heroic months of the Great Strike. In the place of real action it is asking the rank and file to place their faith in the supposed power of the TUC and the dubious prospect of a Labour government.

Even so the TUC bigwigs who last year voted so fulsomely to give "full support" for the miners are doing their utmost to spike the NUM motion, fearing that if such a motion was allowed to pass it would prove unpalatable to an opinion poll obsessed Neil Kinnock. Indeed Kinnock has already indicated what he thinks of the victimised miners by his snooty dismissal of Benn's Amnesty Bill.

If Kinnock shows such contempt for the imprisoned and sacked miners now, what can we expect if the Labour Party forms a government? Remember that when the Labour Party was last elected back in 1974 it refused to do a thing to ensure the release of the Shrewbury 2, Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson. As far as Kinnock is concerned, the miners' Great Strike was acutely embarrassing. He did everything in his power to stab it in

the back. Let the class war prisoners rot, says Judas Kinnock, and as to those sacked they can go through an NCB review procedure which will only let those not sacked for "serious or violent offences" through its net.

Kinnock pompously presents himself and the "next Labour government" as the only realistic hope for the whole working class. Seeing no alternative, many who have suffered under Thatcher's openly anti-working class government reckon that Kinnock is their best bet. Certainly a TUC, which is still smarting from its rude exclusion from the corridors of power and has seen the divisive impact of Tory anti-union legislation has had on its various affiliates, is increasingly desperate to see Kinnock in No 10 Downing Street at any price. The same can be said of the entire Parliamentary Labour Party. For all the militant posturing of the likes of Benn and Skinner even they are prepared to bury their differences for the sake of unity and the "next Labour government". Arthur Scargill is of the same mould. He has dropped his talk of the necessity of industrial action to save miners' jobs and replaced it with calls to vote Labour.

But what sort of government is Kinnock offering? Well, besides not giving a damn about the class war prisoners, Kinnock is not even promising to fight for full employment, let alone socialism. He has in fact dropped one after another of the radical pledges contained in the party's 1979 election manifesto. So the "next Labour government" is not even presenting itself as anything different from the Wilson/Callaghan one of 1974-9 which connived at and engineered an unprecedented drop in the living standards of the working class. The economic conditions of the late 1980s will undoubtedly be worse not better for British capitalism. And a Labour government, committed as it will undoubtedly be to the survival of capitalism, will be forced to attempt to make the workers pay for the system's failure.

Given that Kinnock does not feel the need to come up with the radical reformist nonsense of 1979 and

that he is cynically attacking the "hard left" for supposedly damaging Labour's chances, there is no excuse for having any illusions whatsoever in the "next Labour government". The fact that despite this a whole spectrum on the left of the workers' movement, including left Labourites like Scargill as well as CPGB members such as our Euros and Chatterboxes, *Militant*, and most other Trotskyites do, just goes to show how deep the ideological and political crisis gripping the left is.

Having no serious fighting strategy with which to combat the Thatcherite offensive they all rush into the tender embrace of Labourite parliamentary politics, which far from being an alternative to the austerity of today will only deliver more of the same medicine. If proof of the bankruptcy of the British left were needed here it is.

What we should be doing is fighting in the here and now. Fighting for what the working class needs, not what capitalism can afford. Fighting for jobs and decent pay now, not relying on the "next Labour government".

The same goes for the sacked and imprisoned miners. The entire working class must be mobilised on behalf of their cause now. Labour did not release the Shrewbury 2, but the Tories did release the Pentonville 5. Why? The answer is simple. There was a massive strike wave in support of freeing the Pentonville 5 — even the TUC was pushed into calling a one day stoppage unless they were released. What was true in 1972 is thousand times truer today. Heath understood power, not reasoned argument; the same goes for Thatcher. Our brothers can be freed, not if we rely on the "next Labour government" but on our organised strength. The same goes for jobs, pay, and democratic rights. We can force concessions if we use the methods of class war not class collaboration.

The fact that the left does not do this, when it is so blindingly obvious that this is the only genuinely realistic course for our class to take, is not the result of anything as simple as just treachery or even cowardice. It is the inevitable result of flawed politics which does not

provide an alternative to Labourism but merely seeks to pressurise it in a left direction.

The results of this for the working class have been disastrous. Under both the 1974-9 Labour government and Thatcher, one section of our class after another has found itself clobbered; the miners are only the latest in a long line who have been successfully isolated and beaten because of the inadequacies of our movement's leaders. True, there is a difference between the intransigent Scargill and the pusillanimous Sirs, but at the end of the day the struggles of both mineworkers and steelworkers ended in defeat. The cause of these defeats is fundamentally political. Defeat is a direct consequence of Labourism and the unwillingness of Labourites to break the bonds that chain them to the capitalist system itself. Benn, Scargill, *Militant*, and the rest of the Labour Party left are not the bitter enemies of Kinnock, Hattersley, Hammond, Lynk, and the openly pro-capitalist Labour Party right but merely the 'heads they win tails we lose' side of the Labourite coin.

The NUM is suffering from the consequences of defeat. In the wake of the debacle of the 1926 General Strike scab unionism reared its ugly head in the form of Spencerism. Now we are seeing the same thing in Lynk's breakaway.

Spencerism cost the miners dear not least in Notts where for years the management rode roughshod over miners and their families, who were unable to fight back. Unfortunately Spencerism was not smashed but incorporated back into the National Union of Mineworkers when it superseded the old Miners' Federation of Great Britain in 1948. The consequences of this failure and the continuation of a loose federal structure in the NUM are with us today with the "Nottinghamshire Union of Mineworkers".

If Lynk's new Spencerite union is not smashed soon and smashed decisively then there will be great danger of fragmentation of the NUM, with the formation of a rival union incorporating not only Notts but also South Derbyshire and Leicestershire. And if this can happen in the traditionally militant and well organised mining industry,

there is the distinct possibility that Britain could see the emergence of an openly scabbing trade union centre, a bosses' trade union centre like *Solidarnosc* in Poland, centred on the UETPU and perhaps the AUEW, embracing scabs like Lynk and his ilk.

This must not be allowed to happen. Conciliation, 'building bridges', backroom deals can only encourage those set on a course of no strike deals and the most foul scabbing. Unless this *Solidarnosc* — like yellow unionism is confronted head on it will act like a cancer and affect every union in every industry. Only expelling scab leaders and their yellow unions and launching a concerted offensive for the hearts and minds of the rank and file can stop scab unionism in its tracks. And for that what is needed is a militant rank and file movement which is committed to class war not class peace.

The TUC tops will of course be trying might and main to stitch together some unholy compromise. And if this fails they will attempt to extract far reaching concessions in return for non-recognition. Likewise the Labour Party: Hammond, Duffy, and not least Lynk are all *laval* members of the party. To countenance a break from them in the course of wheeler-dealer, bureaucratic negotiations Kinnock will demand his pound of flesh.

No, the way to smash the possibility of a British *Solidarnosc*, the way to reverse the tide of no strike scabbing unionism is for the militant rank and file to take matters into their own hands. In the coalfields the National Rank and File Miners' Movement has the responsibility of taking the fight into Notts, cutting across the intricacies of bureaucratic area fieldings, and getting to the ordinary miners themselves over the heads of their scab leaders. In the face of scab union leaders organising, the militant rank and file should not have the slightest compunction in doing the same. We say: no concessions, no compromises with scab unionism, organise the militants across union and industrial divides, on to a national organisation of militants.

Jack Conrad

## "Thieves and splitters"?

THE failure of the official labour movement to rally to the aid of the miners during their Great Strike spoke volumes about the need for the rank and file to organise independently of their misleaders. Today the failure of the very same official leaders to lift a finger for the sacked and imprisoned miners reinforces the necessity for independent organisation of rank and file militants. Even in the NUM there is an urgent need to cut through the Gordian knot of the official leadership. Not only are there open splitters still openly operating at an area and national level but even intransigent leaders like Scargill have taken a step back from militancy.

Having lost the Great Strike and the ballot for a levy for the sacked miners Scargill and his close colleagues have retreated to entrenching themselves in the union machinery by successfully getting through sweeping rule changes. This retreat poses the rank and file with a stark choice. Either they can tail one left reformist leader after another, be little more than cannon fodder for them in strikes and voting fodder in union elections, or they can take up the challenge presented by the NCB and the Tories themselves, organise themselves into a militant movement which will only support leaders as long as and as much as they stand by the interests of the working class as a

whole. This is a correct approach for militant miners to take and communists should support them wholeheartedly in all moves they take in this direction.

This being the case how sad it was to read in July's *Straight Left* a vicious attack on the National Rank and File Miners' Movement. Not being content to rubbish it as an "apparent offshoot of a group called 'Worker Power'", *Straight Left* brand the NRM under the catch all "thieves and splitters". In the name of the official movement the Straight Leftist hack Tony Barr also considers it his duty to expose the WRP's march from Edinburgh to London as an attempt to "divert

funds" away from the NUM's Miners' Solidarity Fund.

While our differences with the WRP are many and deep we cannot let this unprincipled attack go unanswered. In the absence of any official mass campaign by the NUM itself let alone the TUC it was correct to back the WRP's initiative. Their campaign far from diverting support from the fund undoubtedly generated much support for it as well as taking the issue of the sacked and imprisoned miners before thousands of rank and file workers. Of course the march was used to build the WRP. What else would one expect from the WRP or for that matter any self respecting political organisation.

We would also defend Martin Walker and NOMPAS from the *Straight Left* deceivers. We have important criticisms of NOMPAS. But our criticisms are political and we certainly condemn the accusation that NOMPAS, like the WRP, is "diverting cash" from the NUM. If these foul accusations were true why would Arthur Scargill appear with WRP marchers to be photoed for *News Line*, why did Peter Heathfield do the same, and why did both Henry Richardson and Jack Collins speak to the mass rally the WRP organised in London at the end of the march? Are they crypto-Trots or plain naive? We think neither.



## Defend our Party

EAGLE eyed readers will have noticed that in this edition we have changed the slogan "For a reformed Communist Party!" on our banner to "Defend and reforge the Communist Party!" The reasons for this will be obvious to all readers of *The Leninist* — the CPGB is in danger of disintegration and of course unless this threat is defeated it will be impossible to reforge it. (For a full treatment of this question turn to this month's supplement.)

The most immediate agent for disintegration is those forces aligned around the editor of the *Morning Star* Tony Chater. Almost despite themselves they are being propelled by the logic of liquidationism out of the Communist Party. This was graphically illustrated by the July 19 meeting of the Communist Campaign Group. While speaker after speaker emphasised that there was a marked reluctance to discuss the formation of a new party at the grass roots, while even Tony Chater pledged himself to continue the struggle in the Party, and while hopes were placed on the far distant 40th Congress, other decisions militated against such declarations.

By not questioning Tony Chater's right to treat the *Morning Star* as a piece of personal property, by arguing that the democracy of the PPPS is for communists higher than the Communist Party, by refusing to accept the principle of unity in action, those at the CCG meeting accept liquidationism. Because of this the decision to launch a new "Labour Monthly", raise money for a full timer for the CCG, and convene a national conference in November which will elect a steering committee can only be a step — perhaps a fatal one — to the de facto formation of a new party. And this is precisely what certain forces in the CCG are calculating on.

They believe that by encouraging comrades to make futile gestures of defiance against the Party EC and thereby getting themselves uselessly expelled nothing can stop the formation of the new party they have been working for. This is a very dangerous and very dishonest form of politics. Comrades should not allow themselves to be manipulated into forming a new party despite themselves. If they don't want to split the CPGB the leaders of the CCG should put a stop to all petty flouting of Party rules for the sake of it, they should at the very least come clean on what their real intentions are.

The leaders of the CCG at least formally make gestures towards Party unity; unfortunately this cannot be said of comrade Martin Jacques in his report to the EC. Far from taking a course that will restore Party unity comrade Jacques seems intent on kicking out all who don't agree with his analysis of Thatcherism. This is a road to disaster and has nothing in common with the principles of democratic centralism. For although democratic centralism demands unity in action, say for example at the PPPS AGM, it allows for the fullest possible debate before and after a particular action.

If comrade Jacques's line is carried out in practice then the CPGB will see itself reduced to a 'pure' Euro party, with no mass contacts, and no future beyond being a neo-Fabian "think tank" for the likes of Neil Kinnock. Because of this it is essential to defend our Party from the liquidationist threat posed by Chaterism and that of ultra-Eurocommunism.

Unless the slide towards liquidationism is stopped and stopped soon then the CPGB will be no more. And no Chaterite *Morning Star* party or leftist sect can build the sort of communist organisation founded in 1920 and so desperately needed today. The best they can manage is to parade around as a grotesque parody of such an organisation, at worst dissolve themselves into the swamp of the "broad labour movement" there to be indistinguishable from run of the mill left Labourites.

*The Editor*

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Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5.00, Institutions £7.00; Europe £8.00, Institutions £10.00; All other countries £10.00, Institutions £12.00.

Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1.00 each plus 25p p&p. Issues of paper (from issue 7) 30p each plus 10p p&p.

All cheques payable to *The Leninist*

Printed and typeset by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16.

Published by: The Leninist Publications, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX © World copyright August 1985

## LETTERS

Below, we print three letters from comrades who while in no way being Leninists were asked to address our summer school in June. Their refusal to do so and the reasons they give speak volumes about the state of the centrist opposition and, in the case of John Rees, its disintegration.

### Summer school 1

I return herewith your invitation to your summer school and the latest Leninist letter. In many respects, when I was going through the hell of being on an EC abandoning all pretence of being a democratic centralist party, making all decisions from the top and rejecting the elected programme and rules of the CPGB, I was grateful for your paper and newsletter. It helped to crystallise my own views, which are pro-Party and anti-liquidationist. However, your current volte-face on the PPPS Eurocommunist recommended list, calling in effect for us to support an undemocratic faction of the CP right to take over the only left, independent daily newspaper in Britain, was too much for me to stomach. However convoluted your reasoning about being 'pro-Party' that is in effect what your argument would have led to. To have won the 'Congress' and the 'PPPS AGM' would have given them the clear ideological victory they called for. As it is, they have been proved the Mensheviks because the NCP/LP vote at the AGMs was minimal and the clear strength for the PPPS Management Committee list came from CPGB members, ones whom I would always wish to be associated with and respect.

Ken Cameron's speech put it in a nutshell. He was not opposed to the *Morning Star* having communists in control, nor to its policy being that of the CPGB. What he was opposed to was an inner-Party struggle which should have been finished at the 'Special Congress', or at least carried on within the Party, being brought into a printing press cooperative which clearly embraces non-Party as well as Party supporters (and indeed relies for its income on trade unions, workplace organisations, and non-CP members as well as the minority of CPGB branches and members who actually work for it and raise its cash). I am and always have been one of the consistent minority of communists who have always sold, worked for, raised money for, etc., etc., the paper on the basis of the Lenin/Stalin concept of a daily paper to tell the truth and to educate, agitate, and organise for the working class. Even when its CP policy was clearly drifting towards anti-communist, anti-Soviet positions I accepted that that problem had to be tackled within the Party, not by boycotting or reducing the effort on behalf of the paper (unlike the NCP, etc.). Now the reverse is the situation and I still defend the paper and fight the Euros within the Party in a disciplined way, until they chuck me out perhaps! I don't think they will because I do not set up independently and above the CP or lecture from outside, as you do. However, your PPPS attitude has now released you from the Euros' axe, so you will continue — BUT WITHOUT MY SUPPORT! Please do not send any more Leninists to me.

Former member of the CPGB Executive Committee

### Summer school 2

Thank you for your invitation to your weekend summer school June 29-30. I shall not be attending as I do not agree with your policies or actions.

One of the "London 22"

### Summer school 3

Thank you for the invitation to *The Leninist* summer school.

I note that following your intervention at the PPPS, re. voting for the Party candidates, and the orientation of the school toward work in the CPGB that the Leninist group see themselves as part of the tradition that gave us the 'Euros', *Straight Left*, *Morning Star*, et al — namely Stalinism.

I have been very busy studying and attempting to use our method — Marxism — in order to understand the crisis in the CPGB; its roots, present position, and outcome. In this period which has involved me in a series of discussions with comrades I have come up against the big problem — our history!

In facing this history it has become patently clear that the BRS and the Party that spawned it belong to a counter-revolutionary tradition which comrades must break from in order to build a genuine revolutionary party in Britain. Such a break is not easy and indeed isolation stares one in the face but the demand to fulfil the historic task facing our class is more important than subjective feelings about one's political home. It is my belief now that cynicism and pessimism will be the lot of those who 'stay' either with Chater or the EC CPGB; a qualitative break and move toward the class links made during the miners' strike is a better basis for a revolutionary than a pair of 'wellington boots' for squelching in the mire that is the CPGB or the *Morning Star*.

It is for these reasons — to be expanded in an article — that it would be dishonest of me to join in on your summer school.

John Rees

London E1

### Split the LP

I found your summer school very enlightening and I wish to thank those concerned for the trouble they took. One of the less enlightening features of the summer school was the presence of the Spartacist League, selling their incredibly dull paper and a two page leaflet, which put forward an array of lies in their zany Trotskyite rhetoric.

However, one of the less zany and I believe quite intelligent aspects of their leaflet was the following statement: "a multiracial vanguard party, forged through splitting the Labour Party." The part of this statement I am referring to is the piece about splitting the Labour Party. As Lenin correctly stated, the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers' party. Not because most of its membership belongs to the bourgeoisie but because its leadership supports the bourgeoisie.

Although the leadership of the Labour Party supports the bourgeoisie this does not necessarily apply to the membership. The rank and file of the Labour Party contains many good Marxists and socialists, who due to the cynical propaganda and careful bureaucracy are conned and to some extent forced into supporting the leadership. If we could somehow split the rank and file from the leadership through grassroots agitation and careful propaganda we could reforge the Communist Party back to Leninism after fifty years of right wing opportunism.

Yours fraternally,

Peter Byrne

Sussex

### PPPS confusion

"Well, it had to happen — Kinnock to be guest of honour at the Scottish Miners' Gala! Kinnock the coward,

the Kerensky of the Labour movement. Is this the policy of the Euros, the embodiment of pseudo-Marxism Today, collaborating with bishops, quislings, Chief Constables, and of course Kinnock?

"No wonder Jack Collins has said the CPGB has killed itself. It is time to counter-attack using Leninist principles, to show the way forward, particularly for the young militant miners — the class conscious vanguard of the Trade Union Movement.

"Surely we should not allow Kinnock and the other opportunists to exploit the 12 months of heroic sacrifice by the miners."

The above is a copy of a letter I sent to the *Morning Star* (two months ago) and has not yet been printed. I might say in passing that I have subscribed to the *Morning Star* now for 17 years, I am an ex-CP member and lifelong trade unionist. Now then, which part of this letter was the kiss of death for the *Morning Star*?

Opinions, please.

In all humility your articles and newsheets on the PPPS was confusing to say the least. (Including the leaflet outside the doors, if you read it in time.) Changing boats in midstream is not Leninism, is it?

Having said that, as a regular subscriber to your paper the pages on Ireland are the finest since Engels.

All the best for the future; enclosed £5 for the cause.

R. Wilson

Kent

### Amazed

I was amazed at your recommendation at last month's PPPS AGM for Marxist-Leninists to support the Eurocommunist candidates rather than the left last month. Furthermore, your editorial this month (July) betrays remarkable confidence in arch-Euro Nina Temple's pledge that "there will be no political expulsions" as a means of "maintaining the Party's organisational unity". As far as I am aware, there has been no unity within the Party as a whole for some time now. Indeed, your call to desert the rest of the Party left doesn't exactly seem to me (or other non-aligned oppositionists I've spoken to) to aid organisational unity, where it counts at least. Your labelling of Chater as liquidationist is not only divisive, but unfounded: who's expelling who? Granted, he may not exactly be 'Big Vlad', but he and his supporters just happen to constitute the majority of Party opposition to the Euros and as such we must all stand by them until the current crisis is resolved. Something that everyone accepts is that the communist movement will never be the same as it was prior to '83 and as such maintaining "organisational unity" with a moribund Euro clique is as irrelevant as keeping the *Morning Star* (despite all its faults) for the working class is important.

Yours

John Eatwell

Edinburgh

Ian Mahoney replies:

As an ex-organised supporter of *The Leninist*, comrade Eatwell must know that we do not call Tony Chater 'liquidationist' because of the organisational detail of 'who's expelling who': his appalling politics lead us to characterise him in this way, as you well know, comrade.

As for the comrade's self-definition as a 'non-aligned' oppositionist, this is simply nonsense. The comrade is now in the Chater camp. Logically therefore, comrade, you are now 'standing by' the *Morning Star*'s support for the 1978 *British Road to Socialism* and also its position on



## Ireland.

Our stance on the other hand is designed to pose a sharp alternative to comrades such as yourself — the choice is between us or the social-democratic wilderness that the *Star* is leading you into in the name of its so-called 'rebellion'. Which road do you choose comrade ... ?

## The ABC's

I hesitate to prolong the rather tedious debate regarding the true status of a rather tedious paper called *Straight Left*. But you do — to be charitable about it — appear to have missed the point. Stan Crooke's original article in *Socialist Organiser Forum* was a critique of the politics of *Straight Left* — something you seem to have remarkably little to say about. Ian Mahoney's astonishing reply to Crooke's letter was entirely concerned with the organisational matter of *Straight Left*'s relationship to the Labour Party and/or the "Communist" Party.

Now, to those of us concerned about serious labour movement politics the important thing about *Straight Left* is that it claims to be part of the Labour Left and its pernicious Stalinist politics could well find a resonance in that milieu. The internal shenanigans of the "Communist" Party of Great Britain are only of serious concern to people like us in so far as they impinge upon the real labour movement — in this instance, the Labour Party. So Crooke, quite rightly, took *Straight Left*'s claim at face value. To do otherwise would, apart from anything else, be a form of "grassing" to the Kinnockites and the right wing of the Labour Party.

You appear not to understand the ABC's of how revolutionaries conduct themselves in the real world of the labour movement. I understand that you may not be very experienced in these matters and may well be at home engaging in necrophiliac practices with the "Communist" Party of Great Britain. But you really should try to learn.

Yours  
Jackie McDonough  
Birmingham

## Ian Mahoney replies,

Jackie, please do not apologise for prolonging this, as you modestly call it, "tedious debate", allow me to assure you, we are enjoying the obvious discomfort of *Socialist Organiser* immensely.

To be as charitable to you as you are evidently eager to be to us, we can only presume that you have not read Stan Crooke's original *Forum* article. One of Stan's main points was that there was a great danger that *Straight Left* could, from its position in the Labour Party, attract disaffected members of the Communist Party in the event of a split and thus strengthen organised "Stalinism" in your precious organisation (the Labour Party).

The "organisational" 'detail' that I was thus trying to belabour and which interestingly you now seem to have conceded is that *Straight Left* is a faction in our Communist Party, not your beloved party. The truth sometimes is "astonishing", Jackie, especially for people like yourself who have buried their heads for so long in the Labourite dungheap that you find yourselves totally and embarrassingly ignorant of the political world outside.

Your preoccupations are very interesting. You do not seem to worry about the influence of the "pernicious" politics of *Straight Left* on the Party of which it is a part, you worry for some reason about its effects on the Labour Party. Why, exactly, is a little beyond us. *Straight Left*'s main danger is not as you stupidly

suggest its "Stalinism". No, its main danger as far as we are concerned is its Labourism. But then, given the history of your tendency and movement, do you consider Labourism to be a danger?

After all, Jackie seems to exclude the Communist Party from any sort of relationship with what she significantly describes as "the real labour movement". Presumably therefore, Neil Kinnock is in her "real labour movement", but is Gordon McLennan? Roy Hattersley must be, but is Tom Durkin? Peter Taaffe must constitute a part of it, but surely Fergus Nicholson does also?

*Social Organiser* and its Trot ilk are so besotted with the pro-imperialist Labour Party that they are unable to make informed comments on anything that isn't wading around in this cesspit alongside them. We ask our readers — is it true to say that *The Leninist* has "remarkably little to say about" the politics of *Straight Left*? Have you ever heard anything so cretinous?

A piece of friendly advice for you, Jackie. Our back issues are available at very reasonable rates. Why don't you and a few *Socialist Organiser* supporters club together and buy yourselves a set? You could find the results truly... how shall I put it... astonishing?

## News from Notts

The NCB (Notts) has been treating ex-strikers (generally) quite well. This situation is beginning to change (as I myself and I think most strikers did realise) and that this was only a temporary state of affairs. We did realise that the NCB would try to get us integrated into the workforce as quickly as possible and when it seems (like now) that we would eventually be viewed and treated with the same contempt as the scabs and the scab union organisation in the Notts pits are. Men at my pit are being talked to like dogs by management and the excuse for a set of branch officials (of the company-type of course!) that we have not only fail to represent individual members when being disciplined by management, for example being downgraded to lower paid jobs or fined, but actually directly and indirectly side with management against NUM members. Ex-strikers are beginning to take up the cause of members' disputes with management; however, as we are not recognised by the management as spokesmen or representatives of the men we can only help when we are actually present when the alleged offences are taking place. When this happens we can be present to represent a member or group of members with the meeting (or hearing) with management as a 'witness'. This, I am afraid, is at present the only tactic we can use but the branch elections are coming close and we are hoping, through the demonstrations of work, the like of which I have been talking about, will hopefully cause many ex-scabs to vote for some of our lads and we can then at least get a 'foot-in-the-door' — although we know that we will not (this year) get control of the branch as there is so much work to do in Notts in general, but unlike March 5th — which was a tactical retreat — we are pushing forward!

I have found *The Leninist* to be, by far, the best communist publication in Britain — especially in view of its in-depth analysis on many issues of past and present. The articles of the miners' strike, both during and after the dispute, in my opinion were excellent.

At the moment, my view of my membership of the CPGB is that I am probably going to leave by the end of the year because I find it very difficult to work with the pro-*Star* and *Straight Left* types in my district

— as I am seemingly alone in this fight — but I hope things change, and change my mind, for the better. Yours in comradeship,  
Nye Westgate  
Notts

## Weekly alternative

Please find enclosed for *The Leninist* fund £5 from myself and £1 I was able to persuade an ex-Party member to donate after giving a talk in my trade union branch.

With the further expulsions in the wake of the Special Congress it would appear there will be no effort to promote unity among the factions coming from the Euros. The defeat of the Euros at the PPPS AGM would appear to have knocked them for six; however, whilst conceding a humiliating defeat they are apparently hopeful of reversing the situation through increasing the number of shareholders at the same time developing *Focus* as a safety measure in case of failure.

I must say I was rather surprised at the Leninists' support for the Euros or should I say Party at the PPPS AGM; after seeing the subsequent *Stars* I think they were correct but had I been in attendance I would probably have voted for the Chaterites owing to lack of contact with other supporters of *The Leninist*.

In view of the developing situation and the need to combat the new *Focus* plus the other publications I would, whilst recognising all the difficulties, pose the possibility of:

1. A weekly *Leninist*, even with reduced pages;

2. Selection of and a campaign for an alternative list of candidates should this be found feasible or desirable for the future PPPS AGMs.

Yours in comradeship,  
C. Bartholomew  
Blackburn.

## Clydeside clown

We received the current issue of the newspaper and, as usual, it makes quite a considerable amount of very interesting and, for the most part, good socialist literature. Some of the letters, however, are incredibly stupid, the one from this city deserving a booby prize for imbecility. H.C. Mullin's anti-Soviet gibberish and his cheap, insulting jibes at a decent socialist and humanitarian such as David Kitson makes me very, very indignant. Mullin must be a most superior person, indeed (in his own estimation), that David Kitson or anyone else who has a good word to say for the Soviet Union is unworthy to be called a comrade by that high and mighty 'revolutionary' (sorry, r... r... revolutionary) of Glasgow.

I am inclined to think that Comrade Kitson should feel honoured by the rejection of this Clydeside clown when we remember that men and women of great genius, such as Paul Robeson, Chaplin, Sean O'Casey, Rosa Luxemburg, G.B. Shaw, Louis Aragon, Hugh MacDiarmid, Picasso etc., etc. were fulsome in their praise of the USSR's efforts to achieve a socialist society (despite any real or exaggerated criticism). David Kitson, as a genuine comrade, will certainly find himself in better company than foaming-at-the-mouth, arrogant, hater of what Mullin stupidly describes as "state capitalism". Mr. Mullin (for I certainly would not address this brain-washed bigot as comrade) should have a look at the creatures with whom he shares his fierce anti-Sovietism ... Hitler and Goebbels had such a bad dose of it that it took 50 million people and their own suicides to cure them of this horrible

mental affliction. Presidents Truman, Nixon, Eisenhower, Ford, Johnson etc. all had virulent forms of this same disease, as had Al Capone, Jack Ruby, Foster Dulles, the Mafia, the Ku-Klux-Klan, the CIA, and several Popes, not to mention Reagan and the Boston Strangler. In Britain, H.C. Mullin would have the edifying company of Thatcher, coffin-faced Alec-Douglas (ex-)Hume, Ian Paisley and the Orange Order, Shirley Williams and the Brylcream boys, Owen and Steel, Lord Georgy Porgy Brown and the whoremaster, Gaitskill, Leon Baby Face Brittan and the seven dwarfs in the House of Commons, Christy, the murderer, Scotland Yard, McGregor, and Jimmy Reid. This is only a dirty wee sample of the company H.C. Mullin finds himself in — the noble Order of Slanderers of the Soviet Union, and contrary to his lying statement, does Coca Cola or any of the big monopolies profit from Soviet labour? They merely are founders of various industrial factories; they are paid for the initial work and in some instances, patents are bought. The goods sold in the Soviet Union make profits for the Soviet Union, not the foreign monopolies, on the same exchange basis as the Soviet Union builds factories in Cuba, India etc. The USSR is paid (mainly in goods) for the building etc. but never owns these factories nor the profit from the labour of Cubans, Indians etc.

Why do people like Mullin hold such a view that over-night capitalism is transformed into socialism, and equality arrives like the Genie out of the bottle. That is naive, childish, idealistic nonsense, not in the least dialectics nor plain common-sense. These cynics, sceptics, philistines, the last people in the world to believe in miracles, demand a Soviet miracle to convince them that the USSR is a progressive socialist country ... otherwise for them it is state capitalism, and they parrot these words ad nauseam and ad infinitum. You would think the bourgeois hatred of the Soviet system of society should give them a clue that the USSR is at least moving towards a more equitable distribution of the goods produced (hundreds and thousands of times greater than pre-1917,) but no, these r... r... revolutionary d... d... democratic d... d... dictators of Britain, the US and the F... F... Free World' hate the socialist countries more than they hate their bourgeois masters and I think they would rejoice if Czarism and the knout and the galleys were restored in Russia.

There is, of course, legitimate criticism to be made of any system, however good, but contrary to Mr. Mullin's bourgeois notions that Soviet critics find themselves in the Gulag, critics and criticism abound in the USSR and are freely published. If, for example, a director of the Coal Industry bore any resemblance to the mismanagement of MacGregor, he not the critic

would soon find himself in the Gulag. I have read dozens of letters and articles of criticism in the so-called 'unfree' Russian press. It is here in so-called 'free' Britain that 99% of letters from miners and other workers complaining of unjust treatment under capitalism are rejected. How many articles of support for the imprisoned miners have you read, Mr. Mullin, for instance in the *Glasgow Herald* or the *Glasgow Evening Times*? In fact, Mr. Mullin, I am inclined to think you do not come from this Glasgow in Scotland at all, but one of the few Glasgows in the White Southern Belt of America, for your ignorance and bigotry smacks more of the terrible brain-washing of that part of the world than Clydeside. In fact in my forty years here, I have mixed freely with many Clydesiders, but only rarely have I met with such a biased mind as yours. Thank God, or should I say — Human Progress, for that!

Yours fraternally  
Roy Henderson  
Glasgow

## Freedom and necessity

Reading *Focus* (the weekly paper of the CPGB) Thursday June 20, Dennis Ogden's negative article about the Soviet economy coincided 100% with the views expressed by the capitalist press. Do the EC understand the relationship between freedom and necessity? Or are they suffering from 'blind necessity'. It should be obvious to all communists that the most vital necessity, if we believe in freedom of the working class, is that we must fully unite with the Soviet Union and all the socialist countries, otherwise the pretense of justifying this kind of criticism is only a cover for anti-Sovietism, and gives support to Thatcher and Reagan nuclear war policies.

The Earth is still very young; even after a nuclear it would still travel around the sun for many more millions of years, but without us. Our freedom depends on the necessity to unite and live in peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union, and all Socialist countries.

Yours,  
D. James  
Wales

## Sound approach

I always eagerly await *The Leninist* as I feel that you are the only tendency in the British labour movement with a sound Marxist-Leninist approach. I'm trying to spread the word in the right ears!

For your continued growth; best wishes.

Fraternally,  
George Lomax  
Rotherham

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed names and addresses, and certain details.

## Pull out the stops

This month sees the end of our Summer Offensive. Comrades around the country will be sending in their contributions which will amount to a minimum of three weeks income. We very much hope that our readers will respond with the same sort of spirit of communist self-sacrifice. Certainly an increasing number of readers are realising that if Britain is ever to see socialism then we need nothing short of a Bolshevik type party which requires the highest level of dedication. This is something reflected in the number and size of donations we are being sent. This and the fact that we decided to delay the publication of issue number 23 until late August has meant that our £600 fund now stands in surplus to the tune of £211. Let's pull out the stops to make sure this continues. Special thanks to readers RH and PC in Glasgow, FP in Edinburgh, ZE in the Midlands, and HH in the North-East.



# THE POLITICS OF CRISIS

**Communists should be fighting to replace the Labour Party. We must tell workers that a Labour government cannot bring socialism, that it can only bring more austerity.**

"...I AM SURE that there are some similarities between Neil Kinnock and Harold Wilson, but there are also many differences. Do you honestly believe that a government led by Neil Kinnock would support American military global adventures as Wilson did in Vietnam? Do you really believe that Gerald Kaufmann would introduce racist immigration laws like Labour's 1968 Act? Are you seriously telling us that John Prescott would bring in anti-union legislation of the kind that Barbara Castle tried with *In Place of Strife* in 1969?" (Nigel Williamson *Tribune* May 24 1985.)

Perhaps we in *The Leninist* have overfertile imaginations, but for us the answer to all of the above questions is a resounding 'yes'. Williamson, however, is expressing (in particularly crude terms) the rationale for a process, a realignment that is currently going on on the left of the Labour Party and the British left in general. The editor of *Tribune* goes on to pinpoint the key preoccupation that unites the 'realignment' with their 'hardline' opponents: "the Left has only one task ... to work flat out for a Labour government led by Neil Kinnock ..." (*Ibid*)

Recent indications of the swing to the right in the labour movement can be seen in the recent near total collapse over ratecapping; the marked isolation of Heffer and Benn

'sellout' and 'traitor' have become too commonly used within our ranks." (And why is that, we wonder?) "That kind of language must end at this conference." (*Financial Times* October 3 1983)

McCluskie's words seem at last to have been taken to heart by important sections of the Labour left. Erstwhile darling of the left Ken Livingstone justified his drift to the right and support for Kinnock thus: "The rest of the left must resist the nonsense of a leadership challenge as the cure to our frustrations and continue the hard slog for the heart and soul of the next Labour government. A leadership campaign would be just what the Tories and the SDP want, would divert attention away from the struggle over policy and turn the party inwards just at the time we need to drive out into the community ..." (*Guardian* May 20 1985)

In actual fact, Livingstone makes clear that he wants party militants to divert their energies to a battle for the "heart and soul" of Neil Kinnock. They must apparently "counterbalance the pressures on Neil Kinnock from the right wing dominated Parliamentary Labour Party." (*Ibid*)

This refusal to directly challenge Kinnock the scab is held not only by the 'new realists' like Livingstone, Meacher, and Blunkett, but also by their ex-colleagues and present day

Kicking Kinnock out apparently would be "premature and damaging". The left's subordination to the central perspective of the election of the proverbial 'next Labour government' dictates that at best it can conduct only a rearguard action against the realignment to the right. Its response is typically fragmentary, bureaucratic, and unconvincing. In practice it is tied to

defeat was a useful excuse to attempt to complete the process. Kinnock, in the eyes of many admiring bourgeois political commentators, recalls the 'laconic bluntness' of the Attlee years. The ruling class, however, needs further convincing of the Labour Party's fitness to manage a crisis torn capitalism and make the workers pay for it all. As a *Guardian* leader succinctly put it:



Tony loves Neil

and hampered by the same outlook as even the right of the movement:

"There is only one lot of people going to stop pit closures and that is a Labour government. That is what you should work for and not put people off the Labour Party." The words are George Liddel's, the scab vice-president of Notts NUM, but they just as well could be Ken Livingstone's, Neil Kinnock's, or Arthur Scargill's.

The shifts and realignments across the spectrum of British politics, however, reflect important developments in the British bourgeois political arena. So what is going on exactly?

## The seesaw

The Brecon and Radnor by-election result has induced a 'no-nonsense' panic in the Tory leadership. Their reasonably competent candidate, Chris Butcher, despite having the added advantage that the vastly unpopular Thatcher steered well clear of the constituency throughout the campaign, managed to convert an 8000 majority at the last general election into a humiliatingly poor third place. That Brecon and Radnor was not even one of 130 winnable seats for the next general election underlines just how good a result this was for the Kinnock style Labour Party who came within 500 votes of victory. Defeat, however, has been predictably used by Kinnock to further attack and discipline the helplessly prone left. Kinnock has had major successes in restructuring the Labour Party to make it appear once more a credible alternative bourgeois government party. The Brecon and Radnor

"Mr Kinnock is in a delicate position. ... if Mr Scargill refuses to compromise, Labour's leader must eventually say where he stands — clearly and unequivocally. That is what leadership is about". (*The Guardian* July 15 1985) In other words, 'cut the crap, Neil; what side are you on?'

The victory of the Alliance candidate, Richard Livesey, in Brecon and Radnor was an effective rebuttal to the cretinous 'official movement optimist' pap preached by those like the *Morning Star* who have dismissed the Alliance as 'dead' or irrelevant. In general terms it is possible to say that what the victory of the Alliance shows is that although the objective base for consensus politics now no longer exists in Britain, that it is dead in fact, the ghost of 'Butskellism' is still to be fully exorcised. The SDP in that sense represents an example of consciousness lagging behind material developments to a certain extent. Why do we say this? Well, the first and most glaring point to note about the SDP, for example, is that it is not a 'new' party despite the crashing fanfares which heralded its birth. It emerged as a right split from the Labour Party, not as a grassroots movement or as the expression of some new, insistent social movement, and its politics tended to be defined in relation to the Labour Party, both past and present. In terms of its theoretical heritage, the leaders of this 'new' party claim to be the standard bearers of the old consensual Gaitskellian Labour Party of the 1950s and 1960s. Speaking at the October 1981 SDP conference, the



Ken loves Neil

on the Labour NEC; the parting of the ways of 'Red' Ken Livingstone and *Labour Herald*; and the dropping of Benn and Skinner as recommended candidates by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. The process is not such a recent one, however. Way back at the opening of the October 1983 Labour Party Conference Sam McCluskie, the Labour Party chair, warned delegates that the time was ripe to end internal strife if Labour was to win electoral support. "Words like

opponents in the 'hard left' of the party. *Labour Herald*, the mouthpiece of the 'hardliners', has called for "a regroupment of the left to challenge Kinnock's road". This "challenge", however, is to stop well short of a campaign to unseat the scumbag and traitor from leadership of the party. *Labour Herald* dodges that one in no uncertain terms:

"We are for challenging Kinnock's policies, not Kinnock the person."



bland Shirley Williams, told delegates:

"... that they had created a party of reason, sense, and tolerance. They had created a party which was determined to build a new Britain, where 'the scars of industrial and class confrontation would be healed.'" (*The Guardian* October 10 1981) Sound familiar? It is the same



Arthur loves Neil

old right wing social democratic claptrap preached throughout the postwar boom, and today carried on by Kinnock and Hattersley *et al*. Yet why did the political tendency that became the SDP no longer feel it could be accommodated in the roomy Labour Party broad church? The answer has more to do with the nature of the Labour Party as a bourgeois workers' party, rather than any independent dynamism of the Social Democratic 'movement', which to be fair has the snap and pizzazz of a telephone directory. The Labour Party is by definition a contradictory party. Despite the periodic incantations of Clause Four and the interminable tailchasing efforts of the Labour left, the party remains one thoroughly committed to the maintenance and prosperity of British imperialism. Yet it also has the task of 'defending' (or rather, appearing to) working class interests. The role of the left and right in such a political formulation is therefore symbiotic rather than ultimately antagonistic. The right presents the 'moderate', 'reasonable', and of course fiercely 'national' face that seeks moderate reforming solutions within the framework of capitalism; the left on the other hand must present a radical reforming visage, with a more expressly 'class' appeal, in order to anchor what is the Labour Party's mass electoral base, the working class. This puts the seemingly never-ending seesawing between left and right in the party in its proper context: seesaws do not work, after all, unless there are two people on opposite ends.

However, from the 1960s and into the 1970s the strain of running a stagflation-bound Britain began to tell on the Labour Party and its treacherous dual role, a problem that was brought to a head in the 1979 general election. The phenomenon that can broadly (very broadly) be called 'Bennism' emerged around this time and reached its brief zenith soon after, largely as a response to the uninspiring and shabby experience of 'moderate' Labour governments over the previous period. Benn himself described this responsive nature of his movement:

"If you look at the defeat of the Labour Party government in May 1979, the more I think about it, the more I think it was a surrender rather than a defeat. For twenty years non-political trade unionism had been preached and it turned out to be a cul-de-sac, and non-socialist Labourism had been preached and it also turned out to be a cul-de-sac" (Interview with Eric Hobsbawm *Marxism Today* October 1980).

### The other end

The reverse side of the Bennite phenomenon, the other end of the seesaw as it were, was the political tendency that later became the Social Democratic Party, a section of the political wing of the party that has traditionally sought to present an acceptable, 'reasonable' face of government to the imperialist

than anything else a failure to adapt to the harsher economic and political realities of the latter half of the 20th Century. In actual fact this is Thatcher's key dilemma. The more she is successful in applying the stringent austerity that is necessary to protect the imperialist system (and Thatcher has proved herself an intransigent and singleminded fighter for her class) the more she may damage the electoral prospects of the Tory party.

In the panicky aftermath of the Brecon and Radnor rout, Tory MPs are becoming contaminated with a jittery disaffection. For example, Tony Baldry, MP for Banbury, has already broken ranks and issued his own 'mid-term manifesto' in July, arguing for increased investment to reduce unemployment. "Consensus" Tony counsels "means carrying people with you." Somebody ought to tell him that today consensus politics would mean having a time machine. This collective Tory funk has been building up for some time and we will see further quite major reactions in the Tory party in the future. Francis Pym's 'wet' Centre Forward grouping plans to return to the attack before the Tory party conference in Blackpool with an updated paperback version of his deadly dull *Politics of Consent*, due for its launch in September (make sure of your copy ...).

Already the 'invincible' Thatcher has lost one major battle in the cabinet over cuts in the standard rate of income tax. A combination of Mr Biffen's 'consolidators' and Mr Walker's 'wets' could potentially outvote Thatcher's more wildest boys. She faces a choice between two options: both uncomfortable and both fraught with danger. She could instigate her own Tory night of the long knives, dispatch half her Cabinet colleagues, and see her mission out to the bitter and potentially highly divisive end. Alternatively, Thatcher could 'realign' herself - to the left.

Is a U-turn à la Ted Heath possible? As some have pointed out, this would be the least palatable to Thatcher: it was once joked that when confronted by a problem the Iron Lady used to ask "What would Mr Heath have done?" and then do the exact opposite. The force of circumstances may impel her, however, despite her personal abhorrence of such a retreat. Perhaps the writing is already on the

wall after Lawson's clumsy "middle way" speech and his presentation to the Cabinet of July 11. Lawson assured his Cabinet colleagues that tax cuts and no "unacceptable" cuts in welfare state of essential social provisions were indeed possible: "If there is to be a victim this year, it is likely to be Mr Heseltine. Although the Defence Select Committee has argued that growth of 6% is necessary to compensate for the inflation in the defence costs, the Treasury insists that the MoD have some lean years after its 10% growth since 1982/83." (*The Guardian* July 11 1985) In other words, the threat of the ominous looming shadow of the Russian bear can be set aside for a few years so the Tories can try to guarantee some internal security.

### Our chance

Kinnock and the majority of the British left now share the same pessimistic outlook for the coming period: nothing can be done to beat the Tories other than the election of a Labour government. At the Durham Miners' Gala NUM official Harold Mitchell berated those militant miners who heckled Neil Kinnock: "I hope some of these lads realise that without a Labour government they won't have a job." In other words, the only hope that miners have of protecting their livelihoods is a Kinnock-led Labour government, which of course is no hope at all. Key sections of the left have accepted this perspective, and even those hopelessly misnamed 'hard left' elements, in their ducking of the issue of Kinnock's leadership, similarly subordinate the fight to defend the interests of our class to the fight to get Neil the scab, the scummy stabber-in-the-back of the miners, into Number 10.

The new consensus forged by this rigorous Tory regime is one fully committed to the restoring of the profit levels of British capitalism. "We are all Thatcherites now ..." claims Hugo Young in *The Guardian* of July 16. Not quite, but we know what he means. The left for the most part remains committed to the election of a Labour Party which:

- is equivocal over renationalisation, as Hattersley has indicated;
- in the form of John Prescott, has backed away from any commitment against the Tory anti-trade union laws; and
- through Kinnock, promises that those miners "properly tried and convicted" by the bosses' courts will

rot in prison.

The right of Labourism has a firmer social basis in the existence of capitalist social relations themselves than the left, which is inevitably contradictory and incomplete. It can thus speak with greater authority and decisiveness than the left can ever hope to do and thus always subordinate it at the end of the day to what is 'realistic' for the system. The left plays its role in turn of subordinating the struggles and aspirations of the working class to the election of the 'next' Labour government, because after all good, bad, or indifferent 'It is our party, isn't it?'

In a rather clumsy tongue in cheek article in *The Guardian* of July 16 1985, John Torode argues that Scargill "must be a Tory mole" as "he is undermining Kinnock and ensuring the movement goes into the general election deeply divided and labelled 'extremist'." This is not true, however. Scargill and all left reformists like him are not particularly useful to the ruling class because they keep Kinnock out of office. Why should the ruling class worry about a 'socialist' government led by comrade Neil? No, they are useful because they keep working class discontent and anger tied to the Labour Party. They keep it within the safe banks of parliamentarianism. They keep it crippled and stunted.

The shifts in bourgeois politics present immense opportunities to revolutionaries for they are auguries of vast cataclysmic political upheavals that will accompany the approaching general crisis of capitalism. More significantly, the shifts in the Labour left open possibilities for the intervention of a revolutionary party to expose in practice the gap that opens up between the Labour left's rhetoric about defending the objective interests of the working class and their commitment to the bourgeois party of the working class, the Labour Party.

Such an intervention first requires another realignment, however, one we have fought for throughout our existence, a realignment around revolutionary communism, a realignment around Leninism. That will allow us to cut to the very centre of the debates in the Labour Party and finally split its working class base away from the misleaders. But first things first ...

Ian Mahoney

## A new British right?

IN THE heady days immediately after the Brecon and Radnor result the Alliance began talking not about the balance of power in a future hung parliament any more but about actually winning outright. Such a result would be interesting for revolutionaries. A government of the SDP/Liberal Alliance formally committed to a utopian perspective of deflation and consensus but impelled by reality to attack the working class would not simply haemorrhage support as the beleaguered but still clearheaded Tories are doing. Such a government would find its base potentially shattered almost overnight.

To preserve her position Thatcher may indeed shift to the left. In which case we could see potentially a rightist split from the Tories or/and the emergence of a new right-wing movement. Martin Webster is reported *Searchlight* of July 1985 saying that there is no room for an expressly fascist party in Britain today: but what about a neo- or semi-fascist movement along the lines of Le Pen's very successful party in France or the similar grouping in Switzerland that is beginning to secure around 10% of the vote? At its peak the National Front was polling 7-8% of the vote in



It wasn't the ANL that pulled the carpet from under the feet of the NF, but Thatcher.

some London boroughs and secured some 100,000 votes in the 1974 election. Thatcher's anti-immigration/anti-union firm stance effectively mopped up this electoral element in the 1979 general election. But what if Thatcher turns 'soft'?

The British left mobilised a respectable all-class popular front, balloons and teeshirts jamboree, the Anti-Nazi League, to fight the fascists in the '70s. How would it

counter a movement which is able to draw on significant middle class electoral support and has prominent leading cadres from those elements of the Conservative right, who are seemingly obsessed by words like 'patriotism', 'order', and the fight against 'terrorism', words which express their dread of a working class-led challenge to their dirty system? The next few years are going to be interesting.





# MEETING THE TORY CHALLENGE

## How to fight back?

### Tent cities

### with one tent?

### The 'next Labour government?

### Or build a

### revolutionary party to finish this rotten system once and for all?

AS THE contradictions of capitalism sharpen, the ruling class seeks to alleviate its considerable difficulties by offloading the results of its developing crisis primarily onto the backs of those sections of the working class least able to defend themselves. One group which fits the bill is youth.

Masses of working class youth pass straight out of the school gates



at sixteen or eighteen and straight into the ranks of the unemployed. Others take part in the charade of YTS, then back on the streets one year later. Some (oh, happy few!) get picked off for cheap and frequently non-unionised labour. The TUC general council slumbers blissfully on throughout.

Even after the Tories announced that the minimums set by wages

councils would no longer cover the under 21s, the response was restricted to mere demagoguery. This new legislation directly affects half a million young workers, and will undermine the wages and jobs of all other workers.

But the capitalists are now sharpening the knives for the real assault. Folks, you ain't seen nothing yet!

## Kicked when they're down

Before young workers have had time to recover from the blow dealt them by the new YTS legislation the Tories were pressing their attacks home. The unemployed under 25s in bed and breakfast, hotels, and hostels were first hit. The amount they could claim all-inclusive was £70 in London and £45 outside. This was a maximum, with a £21 base for food etc. What this meant in real terms was that you were allowed to starve slowly whilst living in a cat litter.

The Tories' plans have for the moment come unstuck with the ruling by Justice Mann that the government had no power to introduce such regulations. But how long before they use other means to deter young people from leaving home? Certainly they remain determined to shift the burden of 'welfare' from the state to the family. This is a necessity. It is what lies at the root of the Tory move to curtail the rights of youth.

The Tories hope this will act as a deterrent on youth wanting to leave home to look for work and to force those already away back onto their families, thus lifting the burden of their 'welfare' from the state. This is the simple economic necessity behind the establishment's pontifications on the sanctity of the family.

## The role of the moral right

For capitalism the nuclear family is society's basic economic unit. In periods of developing crisis, as now, it must be promoted at all costs. Working class youth must be shackled safely to the family. To do this the ruling class draws reinforcements from the moral right. Promiscuity amongst youth, inherited from the prosperous 60s has become a costly luxury for capitalism and must be curtailed; hence the Gillick ruling, etc.

Apart from the usual respectful whingeing by the 'traditional left' their response has been negligible.

## Fighting alone

In the past few years working class youth have proved themselves more than willing to fight for their rights — alone if necessary.

In the Summer Uprisings of 1981 black youth stood isolated against the state. Succeeding actions against police racism and violence, such as the Newham 7, have proved black

youth are more than ready to fight. Recently 200,000 school students took to the streets against YTS.

Possibly the best indicator of the trend in the growth of youth militancy is the role played by young miners during the Great Strike. Before the strike they were held as 'Scargill's bogey', thought flabby and apathetic from the relatively high living standards in the coal industry since the 1970's. But for twelve months of struggle and after they proved to be the most valiant partisans of their class.

What is lacking is an organisation with the ability to unite and lead these struggles.

## Political gulf

Many groups try to fill the gap left by such an organisation by stepping into the 'Cinderella's Slipper' of the early Communist Party. All, from the dull uninspiring Labourites of *Militant* to the trendy RCP sect find the fit far from snug. Young militants now find themselves isolated or in organisations that neutralise rather than direct their anger.

Unfortunately the Young Communist League does not as yet constitute a strong pole of attraction to those militants.

The young miners Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland received only condemnation from certain quarters of the YCL after the killing of the scab taxi driver Wilkie. If some speeches at the recent YCL congress are anything to go by some would rather gain infamy amongst the bourgeoisie by smoking a little dope than any principled defence and direction of working class youth's militancy.

## Bolshevism and youth

As an example and guide to our actions, none better exists than that of the Bolshevik Party under Lenin. The average age of Party members prior to the October revolution was 25. Far from holding them down and stifling their activity in times of surges of militancy, Lenin encouraged aggressive and dynamic mobilisations of youth:

"Go to the youth! Form fighting squads at once, everywhere, among the students, and especially among the workers... Let them arm themselves at once as best they can, be it with a revolver, a knife, a rag soaked in kerosene for starting fires... The evil today is... our senile fear of initiative. Let every group learn, if it is only by beating up policemen."

A genuine Communist Party leading the youth in Brixton in 1981, or with young miners in the Great Strike would have been devastating. Many on the left, including our own centrists, feel that all this is fine confined to the history books, in 1905, but is a little close to the bone some eighty years on. For them another quotation from Lenin suffices: "Oh, you, who call yourself supporter of the toiling masses! It's not for you to go to a rendezvous with revolution. Stay at home; really it will be much quieter there." Enough said!

## The need for a Communist Party

The early years of the CPGB was living proof of the attraction which true revolutionism has for militant youth. The Communist Party's work during the General Strike tripled the size of the then revolutionary YCL, swelling its ranks with hundreds of young miners. Many militant unemployed youth were drawn towards communism through the CPGB-led National Unemployed Workers' Movement of the 20s and 30s.

Today's struggles make it all the more important to reforge that Communist Party. The class struggle, especially amongst working class youth, prepares the ground and throws up raw material for such a Party.

Steve Jardine

## NUSS No. 2 – Deja Vu?

BETWEEN March and April an estimated 200,000 school students took strike action to protest against YTS. The trigger for this mobilisation was a campaign by the LPYS. The major product of these strikes is an attempt (with a helping hand from *Militant*) to reform the old National Union of School Students. If the way 'the Millies' are setting about its establishment is anything to go by, NUSS Number Two will go the same way as NUSS Number One. At a meeting for the formation of a London union, Linda Douglas from *Militant*'s YTURC claimed "All the calls YTURC are putting forward can be achieved as reforms if a Labour government is elected." All this and more from the party that gave us YOP, immigration laws, and rushed to the Six Counties. Presumably Kinnock and Hattersley will then finish their performance by walking across Lake Galilee.

These young innocents do not feel that YTS is all that bad though. Apparently all you need is a princely £55 a week, full trade union rights (introduced by a Labour Government of course), and, voila!, smiles all round.

The other main force in this epic battle is the WRP's Young

Socialists enthusiastically crying 'smash the YTS', presumably aided by a TUC-called general strike, they indulge in tug o'war with *Militant* over the baby of the new NUSS.

Faced by the successes of these "sectarian ultra-leftists" (sic) the YCL has quite rightly decided to join the fray. Weak though our forces are, genuine communists have a real opportunity to make a great impact on youth's struggles in this sphere. We should grasp it with both hands. An influx of hundreds of young militants into the YCL would transform it beyond all recognition.

As communists, we understand that simple denunciation, à la RCP, of attacks on our class by the state and the attempts of reformist and petty-bourgeois groups to counter them achieves little. We therefore offer a positive programme of action for a school students' union, which neither LPYS nor WRP YS have proved able to do. We seek by this programme to advance demands that will unify the struggles of working class youth. To make real gains the NUSS must not restrict itself to purely economic demands, confronting only those tasks that it sees as being in its own immediate interest — it must fight

all oppression, all exploitation.

No 'reformed' YTS (*Militant*), or replacement with 'TUC apprenticeships' (WRP). Nothing would please the TUC tops more than youth under their thumb. Smash the YTS, demand the right to a job.

To wage an effective fight the NUSS must forge links with young militant workers and college students, advancing joint demands: the right to work — or free further education from school at a minimum of £100 per week. *Start by demanding what workers need, not what capitalism can afford!*

The union must fight alongside black youth under attack from racists and the racist state, and give complete support to republican youth in Northern Ireland fighting British imperialism.

This is a bold platform, putting working class youth on the offensive. However, it should be viewed not as an isolated campaign, but as a component part of wider struggles. We are not syndicalists. The battle for the implementation of such a programme cannot be achieved without the simultaneous fight for a truly Marxist-Leninist YCL to provide the leadership necessary for a fighting NUSS.



## The Crisis in the CPGB FOR OUR PARTY

*Does the Morning Star rebellion offer the prospect of rebuilding a Marxist-Leninist party? Or is it on the road to the sectarian wilderness? Is the disintegration of the Communist Party of Great Britain inevitable? Should we give up the fight and leave it to become a neo-Fabian 'think tank'? These questions are of vital importance for all communists and advanced workers.*

THE FIRST paragraph of Lenin's classic *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* reads as follows: "When a prolonged, stubborn and heated struggle is in progress, there usually begin to emerge after a time the central and fundamental points at issue, upon which the ultimate outcome of the campaign depends, and in comparison with which all the minor and petty episodes of the struggle recede more and more into the background."

This is how matters stand in our Party. Arguments about shop stewards' "perks and fiddles" along with debates around whether or not British imperialism should quit the EEC remain only a vague memory. But from amidst the often petty squabbles and confusion of theoretical poverty there has emerged one fundamental point which dwarfs all others, reveals them to be little more than sideshows.

The fierce battle which has dominated the life of our Party since the differences between the majority of the leadership and Tony Chater were openly revealed in the run up to the 1983 AGM of the People's Press Printing Society has not only swept many previously dormant members into the vortex but has posed point blank nothing less than the continued existence of our Communist Party of Great Britain.

Will the greatest achievement of the working class movement in Britain to date be allowed to disintegrate? Will its daily paper become little more than a mouthpiece for the left trade union and Labour Party tops? Will the Party that initiated the National Minority Movement, that organised the stirring hunger marches, the intransigent enemy of the bourgeois state which played such an outstanding role in the 1926 General Strike, the Party spurred into existence by Lenin himself, the Party of Cable Street, the Party of the Free the Pentonville 5 campaign, will this vanguard of the working class in Britain be allowed to shatter into a myriad of groupings the majority of which would gladly sink the CPGB into the Labourite swamp? This is the burning question that today gravely stands before us.

Those blinded by Party loyalty for loyalty's sake, those committed to the Party only because of habit or because their

livelihood depends on it, might attempt to preserve the Party. But they are only concerned with the Party as a thing in itself. They have no revolutionary theory in their heads and no revolutionary fire in their bellies. They have no living conception of the Party as an instrument of revolution. The weapon with which the proletariat can match the might of the bourgeoisie with its awesome state machine, with its banks of police computers, its sophisticated lie machine, and not least its dominant culture.

Those who have no illusions about the mother of bourgeois parliaments ushering in the epoch of communism know only too well that not only is revolution a necessity but so is a highly disciplined democratic centralist mass vanguard party, the midwife of revolution without which socialism will and can only remain a dreamy utopia.

This is why a Leninist call for an uncompromising defence of the CPGB is closely connected, to say the least, to the fight to transform the organisation we now have into one that is capable of leading the triumphant British Revolution. Indeed, we can say that for us saving our Party from liquidationism and reforging it are dialectically and inescapably linked.

If we allow our CPGB to disintegrate then not only of course will it be impossible to reforge it but the working class of Britain will be without a Communist Party and with all its faults there can be no doubt that an invaluable asset will have perished. We only need cast our minds back over the history of the class struggle during the last two decades or so and look at the role of the CPGB and its militants to understand the benefit our class derived from the existence of the Party despite its weaknesses.

Who can forget the role of the Party in the fight against the Wilson government's anti-trade union *In Place of Strife* proposed legislation? How the fight was continued against remarkably similar legislation from Heath's Tories, and how this culminated in a general election provoked by a miners' strike which the entire class had been won to see as its own.

Would such a fight which saw tens of thousands of workers take directly political

strike action in the late 1960s and early 1970s have been possible without the CPGB? Could the TUC have been forced into threatening to call a one day general strike over the Pentonville Five in 1972 if the CPGB had not existed? And could the miners have won in both 1972 and 1974 without the CPGB rallying the class to their aid? The answer can only be an emphatic 'no'. And what about the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5? Surely one of the reasons for its defeat despite the heroism, the widespread sympathy, and its unprecedented duration was the decline of the CPGB, its weakened roots in the working class, and the disarray in its ranks.

Faced as we are with the most reactionary government this century, the portentous and unmistakable signs of a new general crisis of capitalism, and the certainty that this will bring with it a great intensification of the class struggle, there can be no doubting that what our class requires is the strengthening of the CPGB, its reforging into a Bolshevik organisation which will lead the socialist revolution.

Attempts to preserve the Party as it is are doomed to disappointment as are plans to reverse the wheels of time and return the CPGB to the "mainstream" of the world communist movement, whatever that is nowadays. Nothing is static; history only knows change and movement.

Our CPGB has evolved (perhaps degenerated might be a more accurate description) from being a vibrant revolutionary vanguard when it was formed down to the "orthodoxies" of left and right centrism, and then the depths of senile rightism of the Gollan days, until today it is faced with the rock bottom choice of liquidationism or reforging.

Of course, liquidationism comes, like death, in many guises. But whether it is neo-Fabian "think tank" euthanasia, the Labourite poison of Straight Leftism, the conservative gangrene of right opportunism, or Chater's broad labour movement bubonic plague the result is the same. Only the singleminded fight for Leninism offers the Party life and the working class liberation.

If socialism is our aim and as communists we strive for nothing less there can be no toying with "lesser of two evils" theories about the *Morning Star*. After all no one can be only a little dead and all forms of liquidationism end sooner or later with the same deadly conclusion. Naturally, moves towards liquidationism will be uneven; some can more easily be countered than others, and at a particular point in time one liquidationist grouping will be holding back another rushing forward; there are bound to be contradictions, even paradoxes, and this raises the subject of strategy and tactics.

### 1. Strategy and tactics

Those around *The Leninist* recognise that the struggle for a genuinely Leninist CPGB is in its first stages. This is something which means that as well as not deluding ourselves that we are *the* Party like so many groups which manage to cobble together a hundred or so supporters we also make no claim to have developed a strategy (i.e. a programme) for socialist revolution.

This said we are acutely conscious that if such a strategy is to be developed, let alone carried out, the fundamental question on which this hinges today is the reforging of the CPGB. For Leninists this struggle for organisation is therefore of strategic importance, the sort of cardinal importance delineated by Lenin when he declared: "Unless the masses are organised, the proletariat is nothing. Organised it is everything." (*CW* Vol. 11 p.320) Extrapolating from this we could perhaps say that unless communists are organised into a party they are nothing. Organised they can make the proletariat everything.

Of course organisation cannot be separated from politics; the sort of politics determines the sort of organisation. So when we look at our CPGB with its loose easy-going approach to organisation we are aware this results from incorrect politics. Our struggle to reforge the CPGB is therefore of necessity ideological; we are aware that only by winning the very many in our Party who sincerely look to socialist revolution all the way to Leninism can they



effectively and truly be organised as communists rather than as militants or simply democrats.

While recognising the absolute necessity for the correct politics, Leninists see this question as ultimately and inescapably linked to organisation. Thus the slogans: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" and "Theory becomes aimless if it is not connected to revolutionary organisation". Because of this we utterly reject the fatuous notion that a revolutionary vanguard party can be built in splendid isolation from the actual ideological and organisational struggles of the vanguard itself.

We are painfully aware that our CPGB has a non-Leninist programme and a social democratic approach to the commitment of its members. But within it there are thousands who maintain their fidelity to the idea of socialist revolution; many of these comrades have a rich, even unparalleled, heritage of experience in the class struggle. Moreover, because the CPGB is no sect, because it is an integral component of the world communist movement, because of its traditions and continued importance on the political terrain, the struggle to reforge it can attract even in the medium term many thousands more advanced workers into its ranks.

If the unsparing efforts of Leninists are frustrated and the CPGB is liquidated then the entire workers' movement in Britain would have (as we have said time and time again) suffered an important setback and a long and no doubt laborious struggle would have to be commenced to build a new CP. But unless there is a genuine Marxist-Leninist replacement for the CPGB ready to take up the banner raised in 1920 in real terms, not just in rhetoric, then it would be a profound mistake to let the historically important and still living gain of the CPGB to simply slip through our fingers and allow it to perish without putting up a determined fight to reforge it.

There are many small revolutionary groups which along with the bourgeoisie would welcome the demise of the CPGB. With the CPGB and the world communist movement still dominating the vanguard of the working class these "parties" imagine themselves akin to the insignificant mammals during the age of the dinosaurs. With the CPGB out of the way they reason their time would have come.

Such dreams are doomed to come to nothing. The leftist sects that buzz around our movement are but punishment for the rightist sins of our own movement. They are parasites, not replacements. Maoism, Trotskyism, and Enverism etc. are in essence little different from the Anarchism which plagued the Second International because of its opportunism. When we have again a Leninist CPGB and world communist movement then these pompously named sects and their cloned offspring which are claimed to be as significant as Lenin's Comintern will be reabsorbed or reduced to vanishing point.

Anyway, the moot point is that for us the CPGB is with all its senile rightism something to be valued and we will defend it tooth and nail against its enemies whether they raise their liquidationist slogans in or out of our ranks. And this brings us to the question of our call at the June 1985 AGM of the PPPS for all shareholders to "vote for the candidates of the Executive Committee of the Party."

Before fully explaining this undoubted shift in our tactics and the abandonment of our previous abstentionist position, it is vital to focus our attention on the relationship between tactics and strategy in general and our tactics and strategy in particular.

As we have stated above, the fundamental question facing all class conscious workers today in Britain is defending the CPGB and fighting to reforge it. This is an essential task, one that it would be criminal to desert. In other words the Party is the "main link" today, one which in Lenin's words must be grasped "with all one's might in order to hold the next link." With this, in our terms, strategic understanding of the importance of the Party it is clear that all our energy must be directed to serve and must correspond with defending and reforging it. There can be no jumping over this task, it is a task that must be the starting point of our work, the aim which our slogans and tactics must be subordinated to. And this brings us to that PPPS AGM question.

Since the struggle over the *Morning Star* exploded in 1983 we had maintained an

intransigent and militant abstentionist position. This tactic was determined by our view that what was taking place was an inner-Party struggle and that far from the Executive Committee or the Management Committee deserving support, even critical support, it was essential to construct a pro-Party bloc simply because both the main protagonists were characterised in one way or another by liquidationism.

In practice this had little or no effect on the votes of the EC; certainly it was highly unlikely that partisans of *Marxism Today* would follow our call. This was not, we believed, the case with those supporting the Management Committee.

The understandable revulsion of many good communists at the excesses of Eurocommunism had driven them into rebellion against Party discipline and into the arms of Tony Chater. Our chief aim in arguing for abstention was to detach healthy or at least potentially healthy forces from the pro-Chater/Costello camp. We knew that many of these comrades intended to vote for the Management Committee slate, using the dubious doctrine of the lesser of two evils; that while considering Chater a "shit" or something equally uncomplimentary such comrades were desperate to prevent the *Morning Star* going the same way as *Marxism Today*. It was this lesser of two evils trap we sought to overcome with our pox on both your houses tactics.

Now, tactics should by their very nature be flexible. They are after all only designed to serve the main strategic thrust or aim. Tactics are determined by short term changes in the overall struggle and should therefore be adopted or discarded according to strategic considerations. Refusal to change tactics, an infatuation with one slogan has nothing to do with Leninism but is an example of opportunism, either left or right.

To prove our point it is well worth recalling the numerous and often dramatic changes in methods and tactics employed by the Bolsheviks themselves. On the one hand their underground committees staffed by the "committee men", their Duma deputies, their organisational split with the Mensheviks, and how under the impact of the 1905 Revolution and the shift towards becoming a mass party, how they boycotted the Duma, fought to overcome the conservatism of the "committee men" to the opening up of the party. How with the defeat of the revolutionary wave they reunited with the Mensheviks in the downturn of 1906-1912 only to formally expel the Mensheviks from the party in 1912 when the period of reaction had come to an end with a massive upsurge in the class struggle.

These changes and many more did not involve sacrifice of principle in any shape or form. On the contrary, they were principled because they served the strategic aim. There were inevitably those who for one reason or another elevated their opposition to these tactical changes to the level of principle. Such was the case when in the aftermath of the defeat of the 1905 Revolution the likes of Bogdanov demanded the boycotting of all legal possibilities and the throwing of all resources into illegal work. This reflected the retreat of the masses and the growing isolation of the vanguard, something Lenin recognised and sought to overcome or at least minimise by insisting on the party taking advantage of any possibility of legal work that was still available. Those who on principle opposed this had to be and were ideologically and politically defeated on principle simply because if they had not been then the strategic aims of the party would have been jeopardised.

Now, it was to serve and indeed emphasise in the starkest possible way our central strategic aim of defending and reforging the CPGB that we were duty bound to change our tactics towards PPPS AGMs. Needless to say, in doing so we were neither sacrificing any principle nor contradicting any of our central postulates. What we were responding to was what we saw as a qualitative change in the struggle between the EC and the MC, namely the latter's taking the whole struggle for control of the *Morning Star* from being an inner-Party one to being for or against the Party itself. Under such circumstances we had no choice unless we were to abandon our strategic aim, unless we were to replace defending and reforging the CPGB with some other strategy.

But before looking at what we called for in more detail it is important that we examine our assessment that a qualitative

change has taken place in the nature of the question confronting PPPS shareholders.

## 2. "An outside body"

Chater's liquidationism has now almost gone full course. Conceived like all other forms of liquidationism through a union of political poverty and narrow ambition, Chater's was hatched under the heat of the clamour to transform the grey *Morning Star* into a raging pink Euro daily. Having cynically broken through the shell of EC collective responsibility, its first squawking cry was to proclaim the CPGB an "outside body". Then, spreading its flimsy broad labour movement wings, it flew from the Party by taking the whole argument around the style and content of the *Morning Star* first into one about control of the paper and now towards its full liquidationist conclusion with the forming of the Communist Campaign Group.

There are many who refuse to confront the ugly liquidationist reality of Chater's politics. Even we could be accused of being tardy in realising the extent to which it had evolved. Yes, we branded Chater liquidationist from the very beginning. But, as those who attended the 1985 PPPS AGM will know, while we were selling a paper which called for an abstention against both the EC's slate and the MC's we were also distributing a statement which overruled this and argued for a vote for the candidates of the EC.

This state of affairs was obviously not intentional; it certainly was not as some have maliciously suggested an "eleventh hour" stunt designed to achieve publicity. No, far from it. The truth was that we were slow in appreciating just how ripe Chater's liquidationism had become, and having once concluded that it had qualitatively changed the nature of the debate from being an inner-Party one to an attack on the very idea of the Party we had to act quickly and issue a call for a vote for the Party, and this could be done in one way and one way alone — voting for the candidates of the Party leadership.

Now, there can be no suggestion that a Leninist-led party could ever bring itself to tolerate the sort of behaviour we have seen from Chater. Democratic centralism would have required acceptance of majority decisions on the style and content of the Party's paper. And here we are not talking about the bureaucratic centralism often mistaken for democratic centralism; we are dealing with a genuinely revolutionary party which while demanding the strictest discipline and a high level of centralisation would allow differences the fullest possible airing.

Thus in Lenin's day the Bolshevik Party enjoyed an extraordinarily wide democracy and freedom of debate. This even saw minorities present alternative platforms that were distributed to all members and which were defended in pamphlet and book form by their leading supporters. True, at times of particularly acute difficulty these rights were curbed. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that even when faced with the prospect of invasion from German imperialism in 1918 the Left Communists were allowed their own press. Even when in the wake of the cataclysmic Kronstadt events the 10th Party Congress prohibited the formation of factions every effort was made to encourage prominent representatives of groupings like the Workers' Opposition to sit on the leading body of the party, the Central Committee.

But being allowed to argue one's case is one thing — treating the organs of the party as a piece of private property is another. And this is what Chater has done over the *Morning Star*, even to the extent of transforming it into an anti-Communist Party publication. This cannot be excused or allowed no matter how unhealthy the internal regime in the Party, simply because to do so would be to fatally undermine the idea and reality of the Party itself.

To a large degree Chater's rebellion is of course a product of the unhealthy internal regime in our Party — a regime which he until so very recently fully and unquestionably lauded as democratic centralism. Such a regime tends to wrongly regard all criticism from the left as akin to treachery, and having so easily dismissed it then proceeds to witchhunt it. So while the likes of Jimmy Reid and Sue Slipman were allowed, even encouraged, to arrogantly lecture us about the need to ditch "outmoded" orthodoxies, those of us on the

left of the Party have found ourselves hauled before the Inquisition to answer for our ideological crimes such as defending the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat or the need for violent revolution.

Of course, there is no way that Chater's rebellion is from the left. His rebellion is objectively speaking rightist. It is therefore of the same essence as Jimmy Reid's and Sue Slipman's desertion.

This was graphically illustrated at the 1985 PPPS AGM itself when the Chaterites painstakingly mobilised not only the NCP but a string of big name trade union left reformists against the Party EC. And far from this being around a platform of "class politics" (as speaker after carefully selected pro-Chater speaker declared) more than one trade union official let the cat out of the bag by maintaining that the Communist Party had no right to determine the editorial line of the *Morning Star*.

Of course, for left Labourites to deny the right of the Communist Party to control its own paper is one thing but for Party members to take up the same position is a different kettle of fish.

The statement by the 12 PPPS Management Committee members expelled from the CP and generously published by the *Morning Star* brazenly states that they do not place Party discipline above that of "broad organisations". So while they take "into account the view of the Party" and "respect" its democracy they specifically reject Party discipline and Party democracy when it comes to "broad organisations". Thus to "call on members" to unite around a particular line "is quite common" but this must never become a question of "discipline" (July 15 1985).

Such a position has nothing whatsoever to do with a Leninist approach to politics and organisation. Naturally the Chaterites are far from unique in their social democratic practice. But they do, unlike most, claim their rebellion to be based on a defence of Marxism-Leninism and therefore it is on the principles of Marxism-Leninism we shall judge them.

For Leninists the Communist Party is the highest form of class organisation of the proletariat. The working class in the course of its struggle against the capitalists creates organisations like trade unions, cooperatives, shop stewards committees, and as we saw with the upsurge in mass activity during the miners' Great Strike potential embryonic organs of state power in the form of Miners' Support Groups, a working class women's movement (i.e. Women Against Pit Closures movement) and gallant fighting groups called his squads which gave us a glimpse of the working class militias of the future.

The task communists set themselves is not merely to reflect the democracy of these organisations but to act as a vanguard in them. For this to be done it is first necessary to be guided by the scientific world outlook of Marxism-Leninism and secondly to be organised on the basis of iron discipline. Only with complete and absolute unity of action on the part of all Party members can the class struggle and the road to revolution be opened up. Therefore communists recognise the principle of the minority submitting to the majority when it comes to concrete actions and the principle of a centralised Party where the leadership directs the work of individual members.

This approach, while in no way limiting debate and discussion, means that the Party can rally the class, train leaders for the future, and give day to day struggles an overall direction. The claim by the Management Committee 12 that communists should treat the democracy of the Party as equal to that of broad organisations is a negation of the Leninist understanding of the Party. No doubt their organisational principles are taken lock stock and barrel from post-ETU Communist Party practice in broad organisations, as admitted by comrade Dave Priscott to July's Party EC meeting. But this has everything in common with Menshevism and nothing in common with Bolshevism.

Naturally the Leninist method of organisation can lead to muttering about heavy-handedness or even accusations that we violate the democracy of broad organisations. But communists worthy of that proud title do not fear criticism and certainly recognise that while there can be no question of broad organisations (not even the PPPS) being officially reduced to mere sub-committees of the Party the job of



Party members in these organisations is to win them towards the Party and recognition of the correctness of accepting its political leadership.

Now, we are perfectly aware that given the prevailing attitude and current political tradition in our Party that Party discipline and democracy have seriously strayed from Leninist norms. But this provides not the slightest justification for those claiming the mantle of Marxism-Leninism to stand on an implicitly Menshevik platform when it comes to organisation. Genuine Marxist-Leninists are in fact duty bound to champion the principles of Leninist organisation and fight might and main to reforge our CP so that it is brought back into line with these principles.

There can be no truck with the opportunist theory that preaches the "independence" and the "neutrality" of non-Party organisations, not least the "independence" of Party members operating in them. And this applies to trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, trades councils, even the TUC General Council, and most emphatically the PPPS in general and its Management Committee specifically.

Those who reject this form of organisation reject, whatever they say, the principles of Leninist organisation and embrace the practice of the parties of the Second International under the domination of opportunism, where parliamentary deputies and trade union functionaries demanded and were granted freedom of action in the name of their "higher" responsibility to their electorate or membership.

The Management Committee 12 are exactly the same. In the name of the democracy of the PPPS shareholders they maintain that the Communist Party leadership has no right to expect them to support the Party and no right whatsoever to discipline them. In truth this PPPS democracy is formal and what is meant in practice is demanding a blank cheque for these Management Committee opportunists to do as they please, even opposing the Party just as the opportunists of the Second International sought to do.

Everything about the Management Committee 12 and Chater himself smacks of rightism. Their history, their theory, their psychology, and their practice. Tony Chater and his *Morning Star* ooze conservatism, dullness, myopic official optimism, and British political backwardness from every pore. Chater is indeed in many ways the personification of the right opportunist Party hack. A bureaucrat with the personality of a paper cup, a time server with some administrative ability but not the merest trace of revolutionary principle: a product of the degeneration of our Party. An agent of that degeneration who since being appointed editor in 1974 has ensured that that degeneration was reflected in all its insipid greyness in the columns of the *Morning Star*. A plodding member of the Party's Executive and Political Committees who was only spurred into rebellion by the threat that the paper he had come to regard as no different from his toothbrush, in other words a piece of personal property, that his paper would be subject to the decisions of Party congresses.

Such a rebellion is rightist to its very rotten core. Such a rebellion is the very antithesis of the struggle for Marxism-Leninism. It is a negation of centralism and Party democracy; it is nothing but a rebellion for the freedom of a particular shade of opportunism, a rebellion for careerism, individualism, and the inflated ego of pompous functionaries who place their rights above those of the Party and its discipline.

This said it would be a profound political mistake to brand all those supporting Chater's *Morning Star* as rightists. Very, very many of those who voted for the MC slate at the 1985 PPPS AGM did so not because of any deep seated solidarity with Chater but because of revulsion against *Marxism Today*, which they have seen transformed from a boring right opportunist/academic 'Marxist' house journal into a trendy mouthpiece for the most liberal elements in our Party, who allow every reactionary access to the pages of the Party's "theoretical and discussion journal".

The doctrine of 'Thatcherism' equalling semi-fascism, the drift towards a neo-Fabian liquidationism, has created a stampede towards broad labour movement

liquidationism amongst a wide swathe of Party members who have now joined the centrists in our Party long alienated by the leadership's (which included Chater) distancing itself from certain actions by the state in the Soviet Union. These forces of course believe for the most part that Chater is the lesser of two evils, that somehow his rebellion will eventually shift the balance of forces in the Communist Party away from Eurocommunism. But others believe that they can manipulate Chater and use his rebellion to catapult them into positions of political prominence they have despaired of winning inside the Party. Indeed, so determined are some of these comrades to become leaders that they are doing their utmost to foster moves towards a split over which they could rule.

Chances are that such a split far from gaining 5,000 adherents, as some of its self-appointed future leaders assure us it will, a split would severely damage the Communist Party and would, what is more, soon decline into a larger but more right wing version of the CPSU-worshipping sect set up by Sid French in 1977. Certainly there is not a cat in hell's chance of such an organisation creating the Bolshevik type party the working class in Britain needs if it is to successfully meet the challenge of the late 1980s and the looming prospect of a new general crisis of capitalism.

Because of this it is vital that we mercilessly expose those who seek to give Chater's rebellion a left face by preposterously claiming that his broad labour movement *Morning Star* can and does play the same role as Lenin's *Iskra*. For such a claim allows these elements to argue that the survival of the *Morning Star* is more important than the survival of the Communist Party which gave birth to and doggedly sustained the paper for over 50 years. As such it is an extremely dangerous liquidationist position in that it throws dust into the eyes of genuine communists by painting the grey *Morning Star* in the brilliant red of *Iskra*.

### 3. "Britain's Iskra"

We had a turgid example of this attempt to surmount the spirit of Lenin's *Iskra* at the 1985 PPPS AGM in London. Mary Davis delivered an oration on the question with all her usual passion and intellectual power. In other words she spoke like the speaking clock telling the wrong time on how the *Morning Star* was Britain's *Iskra*. Now our objection to this equating of the *Morning Star* with *Iskra* and by implication Tony Chater with Lenin is not so much that this is an example of political pygmies attempting to give their pathetic, grubby manoeuvring the stature it lacks but as we have said mainly the fact that what is being attempted is to give Chaterism a left face.

The truth is that far from the *Morning Star* playing the same role as Lenin's *Iskra* it stands diametrically opposed to the fundamental principles which guided Lenin's *Iskra*. For Tony Chater the *Morning Star* is the "daily living embodiment" of the *British Road to Socialism*.

Now, readers of *The Leninist* will hardly need reminding of our view of this thoroughly reformist parliamentary road let alone the commitment of Lenin's *Iskra* to violent revolution. Perhaps equally damning to the *Iskra* claims of the *Morning Star* is that the former saw its role as both a collective propagandist and agitator for violent revolution and also collective organiser for it. It would be no exaggeration to state that the main aim of Lenin's *Iskra* was to build a highly centralised and disciplined party, capable of surviving the attacks of the Tsarist *Okhrana* and which could because of its firm grounding in Marxist theory elevate the proletariat from a class in itself into a class for itself. In other words, a class which could rally to its banner all oppressed by the autocracy and thus win vital allies in the democratic revolution.

For this to happen the editors of *Iskra* considered it a necessity to defeat all non-orthodox Marxist currents that manifested themselves in the ranks of the working class. To this end *Iskra* strove, in the words of Martov to "make sure 'all that is ridiculous' appears in a ridiculous form" and to expose "the very embryo of a reactionary idea hidden behind a revolutionary phrase".

So fierce and aggressive was the ideological polemic of *Iskra* that Trotsky, another early cooperator and later opponent of Lenin, declared that it often appeared that the paper fought "not so much against the

autocracy as against the other factions in the revolutionary movement." Now this is something that might be considered to apply to *The Leninist*. We are constantly being berated for attacking other trends and groups in the workers' movement by philistines who preach unity for unity's sake (of course they want the working class to unite around reformism, not Leninism). Anyway, no-one can accuse the *Morning Star* of being fiercely polemical, let alone revolutionary. It aims in the words of Assistant Editor David Whitfield to be "a working class *Daily Mail*" and it succeeds. When it engages in argument it does so reluctantly, with a heavy heart, and an economic "we've got better and more important things to do" sigh.

Even then its ideological gladiators are about as intellectually convincing as the arguments of the Flat Earth Society. Comrade Andrew Rothstein wrote a reply to comrade Monty Johnstone's *Marxism Today* article on the USSR which attacks the assertion that the country's declining growth rates were a matter of concern. And yet as we all know, comrade Gorbachev himself openly expresses deep concern at the phenomenon and demands an end to the trend. Equally threadbare have been the attempts by comrade Photis Lysandrou to portray the AES as a revolutionary tactic when it is as plain as a pikestaff even in this comrade's feature articles on the question that the AES is a classic reformist, nationalistic, trade union response to the economic crisis of a declining imperialism. Economistic bankruptcy can be seen in Chater's very own articles outlining his version of the *BRS* and his interpretation of democratic centralism. The same can be said of the awful pacifist pieces on peace he knocks out for every big CND occasion. And what can we say about comrade Vic Allen's convoluted and crass argument that the miners were not defeated in their strike? Yes, Arthur Scargill and other NUM leaders have voiced the same fallacious argument, but the task of communists is at the very least to tell miners the blindingly obvious truth — a truth which they are fully conscious of every time they report for work.

In contrast to *Iskra* the *Morning Star* is not only acting as a mouthpiece for reformism but is positively anti-party. While *Iskra* strove to build the RSDLP, the *Morning Star* raising a 'broad organisation democracy' smokescreen has broken from the CPGB and now sets its sights on integrating into and ingratiating itself with the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracy. In doing this the *Morning Star* inevitably takes yet further steps down the economistic road of seeing trade union struggles as being the motor of history and elevating trade union leaders to the point of considering them the personification of the working class as a whole.

*Iskra*'s main target in its unremitting polemic was this very economistic worship of trade unionism today championed by the *Morning Star*. *Iskra* denied that the "labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself." It emphatically declared that the working class could only detach itself from the confines and logic of bourgeois politics through intervention from the outside by revolutionaries trained in the science of Marxism.

How this flies in the face of Chater's political approach! How this stands at odds with the Chaterites supposed Marxism-Leninism!

If we look at the *Morning Star* over the years we find that far from the paper being an example of *Iskraism* it is its antithesis. This was fully exposed during the course of the miners' Great Strike. In the course of the heroic 12 months not once did the *Morning Star* warn the miners about the limitations of the NUM leadership's left reformism, not once did it agitate or propagandise for the necessity of communist leadership in the class struggle. Indeed, far from simply being content to act as a cheerleader for Arthur Scargill's semisindicalism, Chater went to the greatest lengths in order to praise traitors like Kinnoch and Willis. No-one should ever forget the *Morning Star* headlines about how Kinnoch gave "full backing" to the miners, and how Willis "fully supported" the strike.

In truth the *Morning Star* reflects the backwardness of the British working class movement, wallows in its economism and contempt for theory. This is a million miles from *Iskra*, which constantly stressed the need to raise the working class beyond trade

union consciousness with the injection of scientific consciousness in order to prepare the class to become the ruling class.

With such a poor grasp of the real world no wonder the Chaterites pick up the cudgels of polemic so reluctantly and gingerly. They know only too well that their weapons are made of poor stuff and that they are not even a match for the likes of comrades Johnstone, Cook, or Jacques. And if they cannot ideologically outmatch these knight-errants of Eurocommunism, what chance have they of changing the consciousness of the working class, let alone turning the world upside down?

### 4. Voting for Euros

Some comrades who consider themselves on the left of our Party, but who cannot see beyond the present political line-up in our Party, whose only hope is to make the best of how things are now, find themselves swept along by the Chaterite stream. These comrades, not grasping fully the Leninist position that our CPGB must be reformed, that nothing else is acceptable, that the only real choice is liquidationism or Leninism, opt (albeit reluctantly) for Chater and his "class politics" as the lesser of two evils because of a deep-seated gut reaction against the Euros and Eurocommunism.

Such comrades often profess sympathy for *The Leninist*, declare it to be a "breath of fresh air", even admit that it is the only genuinely revolutionary tendency in the CPGB. Despite this, when we called for a vote for the candidates of the Party EC at the 1985 PPPS AGM they initially stepped back from us in horror and found themselves voting for Chater.

Often these comrades, while agreeing with us about the basic rightism of Chater and his rebellion, consider it simply beyond the pale to "vote for Euros", consider such a call not just unpalatable but unthinkable. Well, comrades, the first thing we say to you is that fundamentally Chater's politics are no different from the Euros. Both stand on the 1978 version of the *BRS*, both are orientated towards reforming capitalism and not overthrowing it, both are therefore variants, strands of reformism and opportunism. For us what made the Chaterite and EC slates different at the 1985 PPPS AGM was that the latter were standing as the candidates of the CPGB, the former were standing against the CPGB.

It is exactly the same during parliamentary or local elections. During these elections Leninists unconditionally support and work for the candidates of our Party no matter who they are standing against in the Labour Party, whether the Labourite is left, right, or centre, or whether our Party candidate supports *Marxism Today* or *The Leninist* or anything in between.

We have resolutely opposed a retreat from standing parliamentary or local government candidates as advocated by the Straight Leftists and thoroughly disapprove of their treacherous exodus into next door's constituency where a suitable left Labourite is standing. We unreservedly condemn this refusal to actively work for candidates of the Party. Likewise we have condemned those who will only work for certain candidates, candidates who are not tainted with the Euro brush, candidates who come from the right shade.

It is exactly the same when it comes to elections in trade union branches, trades councils, or cooperatives like the PPPS.

Those comrades who because of their "leftism", their purity of "revolutionary principle", or even their "Leninism" cannot bring themselves to "vote for Euros" (i.e. the Party) understand little about politics or principle.

As we have explained, principle in politics flows from having a principled revolutionary strategy. It is unprincipled to shy away from tactics, whatever they may be, which serve that strategy. In this light let us look at a few examples of communists having the strangest 'bedfellows'.

Those who condemn the Leninists for supporting the candidates of our Party at the PPPS AGM might like to ponder Lenin's tactical argument that the Communist Party in Britain should fight for the election of a Labour Party government, that while castigating the Labour Party for being a "thoroughly bourgeois party" Lenin considered it correct for the fledgling CPGB to affiliate to it and propagandise for the revolution and soviet power from within its ranks.



Others might like to consider the Soviet state's concluding a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany in August 1939 and its later active war alliance with the forces of British and US imperialism against Nazi Germany.

Are the Euros so different politically from Chater to make a vote for EC candidates unthinkable while it is supposedly correct to vote for Chater? Are the Euros so awful compared with the Labour Party — a party which when in government undeviatingly pursues the interests of British imperialism at home and abroad? Are the Euros such monsters compared with the bloodstained British and US imperialists, let alone the bestial Nazis? Those who are so "principled" as to consider it unthinkable to vote for candidates of the CPGB because of the taint of Eurocommunism have not only weak stomachs but weak heads. The revolution will demand far more than a cross against the name of George Bolton.

Many comrades following the Chaterite bandwagon sincerely feel in their hearts that they are doing the right thing. They instinctively shy away from the EC because to "vote for Euros" is an anathema. Now, sometimes gut feeling can prove healthy. For instance, most class conscious workers have a gut feeling against the Tories. But we know that gut feeling alone cannot provide a clear-sighted, long term strategy. Gut feeling tends to be a purely negative reaction and it can often lead to dangerous conclusions. It leads anti-Euros into the arms of Chater and liquidationism, it leads the mass of class conscious workers to vote for the Labour Party and seeing the likes of Neil Kinnock as the opposite to Toryism. In reality of course Chater is politically little different from Eurocommunism and Kinnock is little different from Toryism. So in politics while we communists must strive to understand what the working class is thinking we must aim to direct its gut reactions towards not the superficial opposite, but the dialectical opposite, the real solution, the real alternative. And in doing so we ourselves must be guided by our heads not our hearts; in other words, we must learn to think using the cool, scientific method of Marxism-Leninism and the communist art of revolutionary politics.

Initially the vast majority of sympathisers of *The Leninist* were shocked by our call at the 1985 PPPS AGM. In the main they retreated from abstentionism all the way to voting for the Chater slate. This did not surprise us nor unduly worry us. We knew that our new tactic was wholly consistent with our strategy of reorganising the CPGB and opposing all moves towards liquidationism. Because of this we were fully confident that we would win back the overwhelming majority of our sympathisers and that the argument and explanation around our new line would strengthen their understanding and commitment. We also calculated that even in the short term many Chaterites, seeing the bankruptcy of the politics of the *Morning Star*, could be won not just back to the Party but to Leninism.

This has indeed proved to be the case. We have over the last few months won our sympathisers closer to us and secured new adherents. These comrades in the main now are self critical about having voted for the Chaterite slate and recognise that the *Morning Star* is on a course away from Communist Party politics.

Significantly, although we openly admitted that many of our sympathisers had voted for the Chaterites all four of the leading Chaterites who we invited to address our Summer School in June declined the offer, even though they were assured that they would have complete equality in speaking and replying to discussion as a speaker from *The Leninist* (see Letters pages in this issue). One former member of the EC declared that while having worked with *The Leninist* in the past, our vote for the EC made any future contact impossible. In a similar vein one of the "London 22" replied to our invitation that, disagreeing with us, there would be no talking to us. Such cowardice reflects profound political weakness and no matter how shocked these comrades were by our line this should not be an excuse to avoid honestly debating the issues out. Failure to do so, refusal even to talk, reveals that these comrades themselves sense intellectually that their case is not a strong one and that maybe, just maybe, *The Leninist* is correct. Of course to consciously recognise this and act upon it takes courage, not least because of the political and personal ties that might have to be

sacrificed.

There are naturally those who considered our new line a golden opportunity to attack *The Leninist*. The Spartacist League carried a full page plus article in its drab *Workers Hammer* entitled "Whither the 'Leninists'?", gleefully extensively quoting our *National Bulletin* (circulated to a large number of CPGB members from all shades, including comrade John Rees) and damning us for choosing our Party; as if there had ever been a choice about it (July/August 1985). And despite us apparently (at least according to *Workers Hammer*) having a "political non-aggression pact" with Workers Power its paper leapt on our change of tactic as proof of our taking "a definite step to the right" — it assures us after having, "rapidly moved left during the miners' strike." (July/August 1985).

Of the same ilk but nowhere of the same quality was the 'polemic' of comrade Mike Martin. His anti-Party leaflet given out at the PPPS AGM in London consisted of various disjointed quotes from *The Leninist* stuck on a one side A4 photocopy with rather inane comments like "now they support the Euros" feebly tacked on for effect.

But as for our serious critics, critics we can have honest respect for despite profound ideological differences, some of their points demand answers. For the Sparts we Leninists are on our way to becoming "hopelessly cynical anti-communist(s)"; after all, the world communist movement is entirely "counterrevolutionary" (like the Vietnamese CP, the Cuban CP, etc.) and organisational unity with opportunists is "pure-and-simple cynicism". This latter claim is despite admitting that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had been organisationally united with the Mensheviks between 1906 and 1912 and that they were a fully committed and active component of the Second International up to its collapse in 1914 (an international which also included the British Fabians and German Bernsteinians). With the confidence of those whose understanding of politics does not go beyond the artless repetition of abstract formulae, the Sparts declare that "Lenin always fought for the primacy of the revolutionary programme and for organisational independence of the revolutionary vanguard constituted in the Bolshevik faction/party. This" they triumphantly announce in conclusion "in itself is evidence enough that the politics of *The Leninist* has nothing in common with Leninism." And yet by their own admission this is patently untrue. It was the case that from 1906 to 1912 the Bolsheviks did not have "organisational independence" but were organisationally united with the Mensheviks and up to 1914 they were organisationally united internationally with "evolutionary socialists".

Like Lenin we fight for the "primacy of the revolutionary programme"; after all, that is why *The Leninist* was originally published and continues to be published. As to the "evidence", the Sparts have no evidence, just devious sophistry, the likes of which mediaeval scholars learnt in order to expose heretics or British judges use against the NUM. These "Leninist-Trotskyites", refused to go beyond their congenial sectarian idealism during the miners' Great Strike, who (unlike us) refused to demand a united workers' offensive and that the TUC call a general strike in aid of the miners, who effectively offered no meaningful criticisms of the tactics of the NUM leadership, who pontificated about "trade union defence guards" but ignored the real hit squads, and who boycotted the Miners' Support Committees, preferring nonexistent "joint strike committees" made up of trade unionists from an equally nonexistent "fighting triple alliance", patronisingly they argue against our support for Miners' Support Committees and sneeringly dismiss them as having only "played a useful role in organising financial support," for apparently they were not the product of a mass movement and had "no social weight". Far from fighting to give them "social weight" by drawing in workplace elected delegates as we did the Sparts dismiss them as "haven for fancy rhetoric", being unable to see a mass movement when they see one. Of course, for a real "haven for fancy rhetoric" one need look no further than *Workers Hammer*.

With slightly less "fancy rhetoric" *Workers Power* cretinously tells its readers that Leninists think the "leadership, policy and practice, the essence of the CP, remains

revolutionary". No wonder it can then go on in typical Trotskyite fashion to denounce us for having a "mystical" view of our Party and call upon us to join the "genuine revolutionaries" of Workers Power and their struggle for a "Trotskyite International" just as the Sparts call for us to join them and their project of a "reforged Fourth International".

There is nothing "mystical" about our views of the CPGB, let alone the world communist movement. That certainly cannot be said of a so-called "Trotskyite International" refounded or reforged. In the sectarian wilderness of the Spartacist League all organisational unity with opportunists is it seems unprincipled, even perhaps Trotsky's call for his followers to join the genuinely counterrevolutionary parties of social democracy in the 1930s. Certainly given that (just as Trotsky advised his isolated disciples) Workers Power is in the 'counterrevolutionary Labour Party it appears to us as the hypocritical Workers Party kettle calling the unashamed Leninist pot black. It piously lectures us about being in the same Party as the Euros, Chaterites, and Straight Leftists when it happily operates in a party with an almost unsurpassed record of anti-Soviet warmongering, colonial brutality (not least in Ireland), strikebreaking, and treachery.

## 5. The fight for Leninism

For Labourites not to have voted for the Chaterite Management Committee slate at the 1985 PPPS AGM would have been like looking a gift horse in the mouth. Why refuse a daily paper when the offer is made? But it is a different question for communists. Of course, for those who seek to destroy the CPGB, those like the NCP and the weird group called *Proletarian*, voting for Chater was fully in line with their, as with the Trotskyites' and Labourites', wish to see the CPGB no more. What of the Straight Leftists? Well, despite speculating about the possibility of voting for the Party EC candidates in their restricted circulation sheet *Communist*, on the day the Straight Leftists voted with the anti-Party Chaterite slate.

Now this was done with the least possible hullabaloo. The Straight Leftists in fact wanted their voting for the Management Committee slate to be known to the *Morning Star* tops like Chater and Hicks but they were not keen on this being publicised. This was not because they feared disciplinary action from the Party EC but because the Straight Leftists are deeply divided in themselves and have, what is more, no central strategic perspective.

The politics of Straight Leftism have therefore zigzagged backwards and forwards, first with Chater then against him, every change in line being carried out with no explanation, no self criticism. So while the Straight Leftists joined comrade McLennan in walking out of the London District Congress they then went on quite inconsistently to vote for the Chaterites at the 39th Congress as well as the 1985 PPPS AGM.

This inconsistency is not just dishonest it is a classic example of Straight Leftism's chronic centrism. Vacillation, lack of openness, and arrogant ignorance are all characteristic of centrism and of Straight Leftism, which despite being still formally committed to the CPGB orientates its supporters towards the Labour Party with a zeal that even puts the most extreme Euros and Chaterites to shame.

It is a fact that the only publication emanating from our CPGB that consistently stands by the idea of the Party is the one you are reading now. For the Straight Leftists in either their *Communist* or *Straight Left* guises, the Chaterites in the *Morning Star*, or the neo-Fabians around *Marxism Today* it seems that at the end of the day the place for all communists is in the Labour Party. Only we stand by the slogan that the place for all genuine communists is in the CPGB.

For opportunism in the conditions appertaining to Britain the Labour Party acts like a magnet. It long ago pulled to it various Trotskyite fragments like *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser* and *Militant*, along with a host of Trot micro-sects not worth mentioning. Now the CPGB is in danger of disintegration: those elements who have been the most alienated organisationally by the Party leadership already find themselves closely orbiting Labourism. The NCP has declared it a

principle for communists not to stand in parliamentary elections against candidates from the Labour Party, in the process condemning the CPGB from its foundation for doing so. Straight Leftism, as we have already mentioned, is visibly itching to join the Labour Party as a sort of "pro-Soviet" *Militant*, while Chater has cut his links with the CPGB in the name of the broad labour movement (read, Labour Party) and even Kinnock's favourite Marxist and guru of Eurocommunism maintains that socialism will come only through the election of a Labour government.

With views like these the pull of Labourism will overwhelm any schemes various "rising intellectuals" may be hatching to form a larger, more successful version of the NCP, a *Morning Star* New Communist Party. Yes, it may be possible through manipulating the anti-Euro revulsion of many good communists to encourage them to engage in futile gestures and get themselves duly and uselessly expelled from the CPGB; yes, it may be possible then to form a new party by default and even get Ken Gill to be its General Secretary. But such a party accepting the reformism of the 1978 *BRS*, organised around the "broad labour movement" *Morning Star*, committed hook, line, and sinker to economism could not for long resist the siren song of Scargill, Benn, and Livingstone. The only way the alluring (to opportunists) come and join us song can be resisted is for the *Morning Star* party to do an NCP and firmly block one's ears, close one's eyes to reality and like most sects deafly and blindly, stubbornly and stupidly declare themselves the party.

Whichever course a *Morning Star* party takes it will be as useful to the working class as a hole in the head. What our class needs if it is to successfully meet the challenge of the late 1980s, stem the drift towards thermonuclear war, and start laying the material foundations of communism in the 21st century is a steel hard Bolshevik type party. It is this goal we must set our sights on, not some new opportunist concoction.

In the abstract many comrades fervently say they agree with us. "When you reforge the CPGB" some declare "I'll join you." Others, knowing full well that the CPGB cannot be reforged without a very high level of commitment, slink off into the dubious bliss of private life, all the while maintaining they have no political differences. Well, comrades, only when you throw yourself into our struggle wholeheartedly can you truthfully declare that you support Leninism. The fight for our CPGB needs activists, cadres, not armchair sympathy.

In order to reforge our CPGB not only do we need to combat the galloping liquidationism of Chaterism and work with dedication and communist self sacrifice. We need to raise the ideological banner of Leninism and intervene in the class struggle so as to win the best elements in our class to join our CPGB.

The best conditions for this to happen are those of the fullest and freest open discussion and debate in our CPGB. This is not the case today. In the face of Chater's rebellion and the 'couldn't care less' flouting of Party discipline by many of his followers the Party EC have responded in a way many of them would privately admit was 'Stalinist'. What is more, certain of the most extreme adherents of Eurocommunism like the expulsion crazed comrade McNally want our CPGB transformed into a 'pure' Euro Party and are doing their damndest to push and shove, encourage and cajole, provoke and torment all others out of its ranks.

This means that we must fight on two fronts. On the first front we face Chater's liquidationism, on the other the intolerant internal Party regime. The fight against these twin dangers to our Party are interlinked. After all, if we reverse the slide towards Chaterite liquidationism and win the majority of the good communists at present following the Chater road to disaster, then the battle to create a healthy internal regime can be greatly strengthened. Likewise success on the internal Party regime front, success in turning comrade Nina Temple's promise to the 39th Congress that there "will be no political expulsions", that the leadership were committed to building "a tolerant Party where different views can be freely expressed", a Party where "comrades will not be excluded or labelled" into reality would undoubtedly greatly contribute to stemming the Chaterite tide.

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Published by *The Leninist*, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Single month's issue: 40p (inc. post). Year's subscription (12 issues): £5.00.



# "SOLIDARITY" FROM THE 'STAR'



Are anti-government demonstrations of tens of thousands fascism's "showy element" or the masses yearning for democracy?

THE *Morning Star* claims that it stands on the 1978 *British Road to Socialism* and frankly, we believe it. The Farringdon Road clique as we have pointed out share key programmatic and policy platforms with the most extreme Eurocommunists. The political tendency that the *Morning Star* represents is part of the same debilitating disease that has paralysed much of the world communist movement and of which Eurocommunism is merely a particularly advanced form.

These common political antecedents are particularly vividly expressed in the common campaigns backed by both the *Star* group and the Euros who they now so vehemently denounce. For example:

## An import

The Solidarity Committee for Trade Union Rights and Democracy in Turkey (SCTURDT) was that most rare of all animals, an import that the *Morning Star* actually welcomed. The SCTURDT was set up as an anti-solidarity movement in early 1983 by a group of Turkish exiles who have touted themselves around Europe since the 1980 coup as 'officials' of defunct workers' organisations. The *Star*, in the form of Euro comrade Chris Myant, brazenly welcomed this development precisely because it would disrupt the work of Turkish solidarity in this country. Why? Because, as he admitted, comrades from the (as they were then) *İşçinin Sesi* wing of the Communist Party of Turkey played an important role in the already existing five year veteran of Turkish solidarity, the broad-based

solidarity campaign, the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT). The SCTURDT splitters were (naturally) from the opposing Menshevik wing of the party.

In a straight choice between Leninists and Mensheviks, both comrade Chris Myant and the *Star* seem to have had no hesitation about which side they chose:

"A breakaway from the Turkish Communist Party (sic) has gained a dominant position among Turkish communists in exile in Britain — and in turn has a position of influence in one of the solidarity campaigns supported by several Labour MPs and trade union figures." (i.e. the CDDRT).

"Aiming to make a new start and overcome these divisions which have tended to cloud the work of building a properly based solidarity movement," whatever that means, "Daysal and his DISK delegation were brought to Britain with the help of a newly formed Solidarity Committee for Trade Union Rights and Democracy in Turkey." (*Morning Star*, June 29 1983).

This is an interesting idea, isn't it? Perhaps supporters of the *Star* would care to explain how *splitting* a solidarity movement by setting up a new organisation is a way to "overcome divisions"?

## Cavalier Attitude

In the *Morning Star* of June 18 1985, there was an article by Cahit Baylav, the secretary of the SCTURDT, under the title of 'Fighting Turkish Fascism'.

The article graphically illustrates the Turkish Mensheviks' cavalier attitude to principle and theory, a

sloppy attitude they share with their *Morning Star* chums. Comrades might be interested to learn that although this article goes to great lengths to pin the "fascist" tag on the Turkish regime (a characterisation which is no longer appropriate anyway), up until July 1983 the Mensheviks of the Communist Party of Turkey vehemently denied that the regime was a fascist dictatorship!

*İşçinin Sesi* on the other hand had no such equivocations. On September 14 1980, just two days after the military takeover, a statement from the Bureau of their Coordinating Committee declared the regime to be fascist:

"Imperialism and the monopoly bourgeoisie, using the reactionary generals, have staged a *fascist* coup aimed at putting an end to the revolutionary situation through counter-revolution and resolving in the negative the profound economic and social crisis." Notice the statement does not simply arbitrarily define the coup as "fascist" because it is 'nasty' or it has killed lots of people. The Leninists of Turkey have a rather more scientific characteristic of this particular political phenomenon. In a definition with which we agree, they pinpointed the essences of fascism:

"... counterrevolution of the imperialist stage ... Fascism is finance-capital's striving to save the regime under a dictatorship resting on open violence." (*Second Conference of the Leninists of the CPI*, p. 20)

The important point to note here is that fascism's motive force is a "striving to save the regime" as a whole, which although it may be led by the finance capital group in the

country:

"... does not alter the fact that these are the objective requirements of saving not only that particular group or even finance-capital alone, but capitalism as a whole." (*Ibid*)

This key fact precludes the idea, prevalent in many quarters of our world communist movement since the mid-30s and certainly the view of the Mensheviks of the CPT, that fascism is essentially the instrument *only* of the "most reactionary" sections of finance capital. This supposed narrow base of fascism allows the Mensheviks to see the whole Turkish bourgeoisie — big/middle, non-monopoly — outside this clique as a force which can fight this dictatorship. The Mensheviks thus encourage the working class to play only a radical pressure group role on 'progressive' bourgeois politicians, not to look to their own strength to throw fascism off the backs of the masses.

Bourgeois rule in Turkey is now in a period of transition. It can no longer be spoken of as fascist. There are 'partners' emerging to share power with the core of the junta administration. The 'partnership' however is not static and there is, as comrade Yürükoğlu has pointed out, a "continuous expansion of the sphere of the civilian political forces."

Popular discontent is increasingly finding outlets through the fissions in the authoritarian regime. Fascism is not a stable, lasting or permanent state form and now in Turkey it is in a process of *disintegration*. Turkey is a country today where there is no democracy; but it is also a country where there are mass demonstrations for amnesty and democracy, where there is a constitution guaranteeing the restriction of the powers of the state and where there are today parties which have been set up in direct opposition to the regime and which participate in elections. Does this, frankly, sound like a monolithic fascist state?

So why have the Mensheviks performed this unprincipled *volt face* on the issue? Let us follow their tortured logic for a moment. Everyone can see that something is happening in Turkish political life. The old bourgeois politicians, suppressed at the time of the 1980 coup, are beginning to speak out against the regime and for their version of 'democracy'. Because of their congenital *tailism* the Mensheviks seek to tack the working class's yearnings for freedom onto the coattails of these bourgeois liars and charlatans.

Thus by defining the beleaguered regime as "fascist" they legitimise their prostration before bourgeois political elements with what they understand as world communist movement orthodoxy, i.e. fascism as the dictatorship of "the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance-capital", not "finance capital as a whole. This "the most" specification allows for class collaborationist alliances with the 'patriotic' and 'progressive' elements of the national bourgeoisie: in Turkey as in other countries the search for these strata is a never-ending and fruitless quest. However, by defining the remnants of the old regime as "fascist" the Mensheviks allow themselves to cuddle up to the treacherous and brutal bourgeoisie. They are setting workers in Turkey up again for a bloody defeat.

## Inconsistencies

Comrades should examine the 'Fighting Turkish Fascism' article in the *Star* of June 18 closely. Given the unprincipled nature of the politics of the 'official' CPT the feature inevitably contains many inconsistencies. Most glaringly contradictory are the following two sections. First, it is claimed that the new constitution and legislation accompanying it have "already closed all legal channels for building opposition to the regime."

Then, grotesquely, later in the same article the legal "mass rally organised in Istanbul by SODEP" (Social Democratic Party) is reported; it was, admits the author a reflection of the opposition to the regime. "Over 50,000 attended this rally despite all intimidation and repression ..."

Don't these two quotes contradict each other somewhat? Similarly, the article quotes the Minister of the Interior referring to the new repressive Police Bill. The legislation was designed he claimed "to fill the gap to be created by the lifting of martial law."

A "gap"? Some gap! Some monolithic fascist state! What this minister was referring to is, of course, the problems that the regime faces as its state form of dictatorship disintegrates: the key question facing the Turkish bourgeoisie is 'how after these past years of terror do we keep the lid on workers' anger?'

Baylav farcically defines the present regime as "fascism with some showy elements." Part of this 'showiness' apparently is that "opposition of [legal-AL] extra-parliamentary parties is becoming a threat to the regime itself ...". Under 'fascism', mark you! This is also a 'showy fascism' that even guarantees the right to strike in the constitution and has even allowed this right to be exercised. Baylav sidesteps this one by claiming that the "essence of trade union rights do not exist in Turkey today."

Surely the 'essence' of trade union rights would be the right to strike. Despite the obligatory and convoluted process which must precede it, this right is now practised in Turkey. That the state has placed conditions on the right to strike is undoubtedly true, but then this could be said of Britain's new trade union legislation. This hardly makes Britain a 'fascist' country. Trade unions are basic organs of workers' self-defence under capitalism. In spite of itself and the subjective intentions of the personnel of the regime, the reactionary trade union centre Türk-İş in whatever distorted way is being forced to reflect some of the aspirations and unrest of the workers, even to the point of organising strikes. *Is this fascism?*

Baylav admits that the administration is "taking controlled steps to meet growing demands," but is this how fascism responds to demands for democracy? The key question for revolutionaries must be, who is making these demands? Although Baylav correctly states that the "democratic opposition" is growing, who should lead it?

The bourgeoisie of Turkey can never bring democracy to the working people. The masses must seize it for themselves:

"The free and independent life of the people of Turkey, their happy future, depends on one condition: on working class hegemony in the struggle against reaction. In order for the working class to be able to establish this hegemony, what is needed is a party, a communist party which has correctly grasped and correctly applies the genuine social science known as Marxism, which is able to unite it with the art of politics."

"Without hesitation, we declare that we are candidates for this job!" (R. Yürükoğlu, *The Disintegration of Fascism*, p. 110)

Comrades in Britain should reject with contempt the hypocritical arguments and opportunism of the Mensheviks and their anti-solidarity movement, the SCTURDT. But also ask yourselves, comrades, why is there such unity between someone like comrade Myant and the *Star* clique in trying to split solidarity work with Turkey? Once comrades start answering those type of questions, they will be on the way to making themselves fit candidates for the job of making the British revolution.

Alec Long



Class war prisoners in Turkey

# The fightback



THIS interview is with comrade 'MD' a member of the Communist Party of Turkey (*İşçinin Sesi*) recently released from a Turkish prison. We would draw the particular attention of readers in Britain to the comrade's comments of the need for *organisation* of political prisoners. This is especially significant at the moment with large numbers of miners either in prison or with their cases pending. The comrade makes clear in the interview that organisation, and organisation around correct principles, is key. Thus, for example, despite their leftism Dev Yol (Revolutionary Path - a petty bourgeois revolutionary movement) partisans were unable to challenge the regime in prison.

British miners in prison face different conditions and different problems. Nevertheless, it is important that they and their supporters take this central lesson to heart.

**The Leninist:** Could you describe the prison regime.

MD: I was in prison for four years, actually more than four years;

it was 50 months. I was arrested in February 1981. After my arrest they took me to a place unknown to me at that time: it was the DAN. This is the abbreviation of the name of security headquarters. It was founded after the September 12 1980 fascist military coup. There are many trained torturers there; they are trained, some of them abroad, some of them in America. As soon as they got me there they began the torture.

The torture methods were basically hanging by the arms and by the legs, beating by truncheons as *falaka* (on the soles of the feet), electric shock, prohibiting from eating and drinking and going to the toilet for a long time, beating the testicles and genital organs by flexible sticks, beating just when they want when you are not interviewed then, degrading by cursing. The most painful method was hanging and applying electricity at the same time; it was the hardest method.

After staying there for four weeks they took us to a prison called Mamak military prison; it is one of

the most notorious military prisons in Turkey. In all Turkish prisons torture and beatings continue whatever time you stay there. The main method used there is beating by truncheons by the soldiers. They were applying military discipline there, and you are under the command of the ordinary soldiers. The ordinary soldier is your commander.

For example, they would tell you "Do this!" and it did not have anything to do with being in prison. If you refused to do this they had the right to beat you.

**The Leninist:** What sort of things would they ask you to do?

MD: The things that they were asking us to do was, for example, singing chauvinist marches, doing military sports exercises, marching on the spot. I want to tell you of one ordinary day of my life in prison. At six o'clock you have to get up. After getting up the soldiers begin to deliver soup. And when you take the soup you have to say that "We are from Ward Number Six; we are ready to take the soup, my commander" in a very loud voice. If

they do not like your voice or they do not like the way you stand up they will beat you and force you to say it again. After getting the soup you have to make a prayer, pray for the army: "Long live the army, god save the army", and you have to use words from the Muslim religion. After getting the soup you have to prepare for counting.

We have to tie up our bed, our things, and we have to be ready for counting. It takes the time up to 7.30am. From 7.30am to 9.30am we do marching on the spot continuously. At 9.30am the counting begins and it ends at 10.00am. After 10.00am we have to go for a little way to the outside courtyard and there we have to do heavy military sports: running, after running some military exercises. One of the hardest ones is push-ups: we had to do 50-80 push-ups. If you did not do them regularly they beat us. After staying there for 40 minutes we had to go inside and then continue the marching on the spot inside the ward. It continues up to 12 o'clock. At 12 o'clock we have to get lunch. The same procedure is followed. Then at 1.00pm we have to begin the same marching on the spot again. It lasts up to 5.00pm. At 5.00pm we have to sing the Turkish national anthem. After doing that we have 45 minutes of marching on the spot again up to 6.00pm. At 6.00pm, dinner. And after dinner we have to be ready for night counting. After counting we have a one hour lesson which consists of reading the principles of Kemalism.

There was a book written by an officer; we had to read it again and again, and the soldier guard may call you and ask you something which he actually does not know. You give the right answer but since he does not know anything about it, "No" he will say "you said it wrong." Then he will begin to beat you. Beating is possible at every moment of the day, because when you are doing the marching on the spot, if he says you do not march well or you march wrong he can beat you; the beating was on the hands by truncheons. You have to stretch out your hands from a very little hole just the size of your hand and he will begin to beat you until your hand is swollen. After the lesson we have to go to bed. Then, when you go to bed you are not able to raise your head, you have to lay down. If the guard sees you raise your head, or if he sees that you are reading a newspaper or a book which you did not have an opportunity to read during the day, he will also beat you. This is the ordinary day. This method continued up to 1983.

In 1983 they said that some of the marching on the spot would not be done. In the meantime you have to prepare for your trial, your defence. It lasts for one year. After one year the political prisoners face the problem of uniform; they forced us to wear prison uniform. We discussed it among ourselves and we decided to reject it. In response they took all of the rejecting prisoners to the courtyard; they tied our hands with handcuffs behind us; made us lie down in the courtyard; poured water on us; and began to beat us by truncheon and then by their boots. Many of the prisoners were severely injured. After that they agreed that some of the methods were to be made less severe but that we would have to wear the uniform. The prisoners said that they would agree. After a while they did not keep their promise; they began to apply the same methods. After that we decided to go on a hunger strike; more than



70% of the leftist political prisoners participated in that strike. It lasted for 40 days. It started at the end of February until April 4. After the hunger strike they lessened beatings but the same forms of control, the same degrading actions, the same obligation to sing chauvinistic marches continued.

Now I want to discuss the torture problem in Turkey, first of all in general. In general, torture in Turkey is very widespread. If you are just a person in the street if the police take you to the police station you cannot go inside that station without being tortured. If you are a political person of course the torture differs in kind and in duration. The legal duration of detention in Turkey was in the first days of the fascist military coup 90 days. After two years they decreased it to 45 days. They reduced it to 15 days a short while ago, but the police have the right to renew the duration. For example, if you do not tell anything in the first 15 days the police can detain you for another 15 days by asking permission of the military prosecutor. The military prosecutors are always ready to give that permission.

Now, this is the way they use the time for torture. The torture is not like the torture, for example, in South Africa or in Chile. It differs in some ways. When they torture you they always keep military doctors in the place of torture. Of course you cannot see them but they are always ready there just to prevent you from dying. They do not want anybody to die because of torture. So they torture you for a long time, but in order not to die, not to cause you to die. They adjust the duration and the 'dosage' of torture in such a way that the prisoner should not die. Therefore there were some political prisoners who died in the prisons but their numbers were not very big; it was a small number. This does not mean there is no torture in Turkey. They use a different method and I think it is a very efficient method.

Because they have the right to torture for whatever time they like. They have no limitation; they can renew the time. And the tortures, as I said, for example, beating the testicles by a flexible stick: you cannot die by that torture, but it is better to die; you cannot die, but you really wish to die. They use this, for example: they hang you by the hand for one hour, two hours, and they unfasten the belt and put you on a chair unconscious and after a while, let us say after two hours, they begin the same thing again. The method is like this: they are trying to avoid death. It is I think the main difference between torture in say Chile and torture in Turkey. Many times the police or the head of state declared that there is no torture in Turkey, but actually they really know about the torture and the methods of torture and they discuss and even decide on them between themselves. It is therefore a complete lie to say there is no torture in Turkey.

The tortures in security headquarters are generally the same in all parts of Turkey, but torture in prisons differs in some place. For example, in Ankara the beating was continuous; but there are no special torture rooms in Mamak prison, the torture was by ordinary rank and file soldiers, by beating, by degrading. But in Diyarbakir the torture was different: in that prison torture was in special rooms, by special officers, and by special soldiers, and the torturers' aim was to make the prisoners make confessions about their activities, about their friends, about their comrades. And as a result of this in Diyarbakir there were many political prisoners who made confessions. All the confessions were made by torture. In Istanbul there was a different situation because in the beginning the prisoners in Metris they began to resist. As a result torture in Metris was not

continuous, this was because of the resistance of the prisoners. In other prisons there were very savage ways of torture because most of those places were underdeveloped or backward places in Turkey, and there were no special, qualified officers to torture, to decide policy there. This was the way of torture in Turkey.

**The Leninist:** You mentioned the resistance of prisoners specifically in one prison. I was wondering how that resistance when it did take place was organised and I was wondering how political prisoners in particular, did they keep alive their organisation, some network of organisation inside the prison? What were the spheres of activity of those organisations?

MD: It is an important question. And the main thing for a political prisoner is not the torture. The main thing is and was and still is whether he has a tie, a connection with his organisation or not. If he has connection with his organisation the resistance that he will show became easier. In Ankara it was very unfavourable for political prisoners because in Ankara the main body or prisoners were members of Dev Yol, and most of the Dev Yol executive members were arrested. So the fascist regime and the military prison administration had the chance to prevent information between the prisoners and the organisation outside, but despite this unfavourable condition some of the political prisoners, especially our comrades, tried and developed some specific methods to keep the connection with the comrades outside the prison. So we had the chance to discuss the prison policy which we would follow in prison, we had the chance to pass information to our other comrades in different wards and different sections of the prison. So in our case it was always generally, always possible for us to decide our policy consciously. We did not decide what to do spontaneously. But for most of the other prisoners it was just spontaneously. For example, there was a hunger strike in 1981 also; it lasted 27 days. Some of our comrades participated in that hunger strike, some of them not. And the reason for this was this: we had been in the prison for just a short time and we could not inform our comrades about our policy. Our attitude was always to encourage resistance in prison, and I think we performed our duty.

In the 1984 hunger strike the same thing happened: it was a spontaneous movement but all of our comrades participated in that strike. During the strike we were always suggesting ways and propositions to develop and to encourage the strike. Many of the other prisoners were just leaving it to spontaneity. But of course our number was small and we could not manage to affect the strike policy to a large extent. As a result of this the hunger strike ended in a conclusion which we did not like, which we did not approve. And the main reason for this was that the main body of prisoners which was made up of Dev Yol prisoners. Dev Yol, which was a very widespread movement before the 1980 fascist coup, was following a policy to avoid its members confessing and to achieve this goal Dev Yol executive members were always following the policy of not being in confrontation with the administration. They were just trying to keep a balance between them and the administration: but this peace is not a real peace. The beating and torture was continuing, was going on. They accepted that situation. They were fearing worse conditions, much worse conditions, which means confession. They tried to balance the administration and to avoid the administration using the methods used in Diyarbakir, for example. But this policy actually did not work. Although there was not much forced confession in Ankara, the resistance

in Ankara, and the traditions which were founded in Ankara, were very backward in comparison with Diyarbakir or Istanbul.

The traditions of resistance which we found in Ankara were very backward. The main thing was, and still is I think, to decide that we can beat the enemy or not. In Ankara the general opinion was that we cannot beat the enemy for the moment, so appease. This was a very difficult situation for a political prisoner to accept. All the time we resisted it but we could not change it, because to change it you have to have a mass movement in the prisons.

**The Leninist:** To what extent was there an ideological struggle going on, even on the lowest of levels, with other political tendencies in prison?

MD: First, let me deal with methods of contact. You had to change your way as soon as it was discovered by the military junta or by the administration. For example, we began to send notes on tissues by putting that note in your sleeve or turnup of your trousers. Of course it was discovered after a while, and then we developed other methods. For example, we used cards, special cards; when you tore the card the note or even the paper was inside it. And it was also discovered. Then we discovered a new method, to write by invisible methods. The methods were like this; but I prefer not to reveal exact methods in your paper because it has certain dangers for our comrades.

The ideological struggle in prison in Ankara unfortunately was not healthy. As I said, the main body of prisoners were Dev Yol members, and the Dev Yol policy was to keep the peace in prison, just to prevent its members from confessing. As a result of this they were not indulging in discussions. They were always refraining from discussions. But we were always trying to convince them about discussions: when we forced them to discussion they were telling us that: "We have got to agree to bow to the fascist regime and as a result of this our main organisation is not continuing the work outside and we in this prison have no idea, have no information about what is going on outside. The only thing which we can say in discussion is our previous ideas, our previous theses. And you know them so there is no use in discussion." And at that point you cannot insist on discussion. But there were other political prisoners from other movements and we had discussions with them. Discussions were better than those we had before 1980, we cannot call them discussions: there were always skirmishes between leftist groups which even escalated to armed exchanges. But in prison generally the level of discussion was low and groups which were willing to discuss were those groups that had some contacts with their organisation outside.

**The Leninist:** From your experience inside prison could you say something about the disintegration of fascism in Turkey?

MD: I will try to say something about this by telling you about changes in Mamak prison.

On August 26 1980 the colonel, the chief officer in the prison, changed and a new colonel, who was called Raci Tetik was brought in. Just on August 26 he began by organising a beating operation against all prisoners. I had not at that moment been put in the prison, but some of our comrades were there and of course we got the news. Our comrades described that situation as new conditions developing in prison. After the fascist military coup they wrote us a letter their conclusion was that: the fascist military coup in Turkey was made on September 12 but in Mamak prison it was made in August 26. From that time up to '82 there was a huge wave of torture, a huge wave of beatings. After 1982, and in 1983, especially after the constitution

## Lies, damned lies and...

THERE is an incondite little rag called *Gercegin Sesi* (roughly translated it means *Reality's Voice*) which is published in Britain by opportunists from Turkey. Its sole purpose is to combat the growing strength of the Communist Party of Turkey (*İS*). Because of a transparent lack of principle let alone a scientific world outlook the authors of *Gercegin Sesi* are forced to descend to the level of gutter journalism in their efforts to carry out the instructions of a worried Haydar Kutlu the Menshevik's General Secretary.

The results are frantic, twisted, and ultimately pathetic. For despite having plentiful resources at their disposal opportunism can by its very nature only produce muck no matter how much brass it has. Readers of *The Leninist* will fully understand this, they know full well the wroth the slanders poured forth from the mounths of our opponents in Britain. But *Gercegin Sesi* plumbs new depths. Its attack on *The Leninist* in issue No.22 is truly worthy of *The Sun* or the *News of the World*, it is certainly unworthy of communist writers.

*Gercegin Sesi* attempts to fool its readers into thinking that *The Leninist* is nothing more and nothing less than a front for the CPT (*İS*). It actually states that "most of the articles" in *The Leninist* are "written by the same pen" as *İşçinin Sesi*. And in order not to give its readership any inkling of the true origins of *The Leninist* it deliberately avoids mentioning the CPGB crisis. Far from *The Leninist* being a product of that crisis it is simply a "paper issued by a handful of Britons who were recruited by Yürükoğlu during the past 15 years." How neat and tidy the world must seem to those behind *Gercegin Sesi* reared as they were on a world view which does not go beyond the worship of what seems to be powerful, what is "official", and what is already in existence. Such an un-Marxist approach would have inevitably portrayed our Party in 1920 as a "Russian import". Now the same un-Marxist approach has to portray the publication of *The Leninist* as something completely alien to the dynamic of communist politics in Britain.

referendum, a slight difference started to be observed. The military officers gathered all the wards and made speeches along the lines of: "You see, 90% of the people say 'Yes' to this constitution, and there is no way for you to reject this constitution, and the rules in prison especially. So be quiet. If you are quiet we will not beat you." And after that they lessened beatings slightly. In August 1983 certain changes took place related to the disintegration of fascism in Turkey. They advised the officers and the colonel in Mamak prison to lessen the beating, the torture, and actually they tried to do this but they were always afraid of a riot, they were always afraid of something wrong happening in prison. So they never completely gave up beatings, but they lessened it.

The main policy after that moment was to tell the prisoners that: "If you are not doing anything wrong you will not be killed; stay quiet. We are strong, you see." But they were feeling that something was giving under their feet. Especially they were not saying it frankly, that something outside was changing, they were just saying "Be quiet and we will not beat you".

The colonel who was called Raci Tetik was a peculiar man. He could not follow the policy which he was ordered to by the generals. Since he could not do this before the 1984 hunger strike started, they demoted him and consigned him to a lower post. They sent in a new colonel. This new colonel was always trying to act according to laws, according to rules, according to regulations. For example, if something happened they would take the prisoners to their office (the lower rank officers) and ask "Why, are you going to riot, are you going to make an uprising here?" If the prisoner says "No, I have no intention of doing something like this" they will say

"Try not to do it again, if you do it again we will punish you." Really the difference was obvious, especially after 1984. At that moment with fascism having lost its grip we decided that we must be more resistant and willing to take on the system. Of course it would not be so easy and maybe several prisoners would have to die to change the prisons, but it was possible.

If we tried and managed to do that, the methods, the policy of torture, could certainly be ended.

**The Leninist:** Do you have any message for political prisoners in Britain most notably the Irish freedom fighters and the heroic miners and their supporters?

MD: What I want to say is this. Whenever the struggle begins in a capitalist country against the bourgeois class the legal disguise has to be dropped and the bourgeoisie has to apply violent methods to preserve its regime. So I think the miners' strike here was a very important movement for the British working class. I would compare it with the 1926 strike. It was a turning point in British politics. So as a result of this I can understand why the British bourgeoisie is determined to keep some miners in prison. Being a prisoner is not a very difficult problem. You can resist, you can try to live in prison as a political person. The main thing is not to lose hope for the future, hope that the working class in this country and in Turkey and in all the world will eventually win: the main thing is this. And if the revolutionary movement, the communist movement, outside the prison continues its struggle in that direction, prisoners are always going to exist. We are not afraid of bourgeois prisons, we are not afraid of torture.

The main thing is to have the right ideology, a correct political way to struggle for it. That is the main thing for the prisoners.

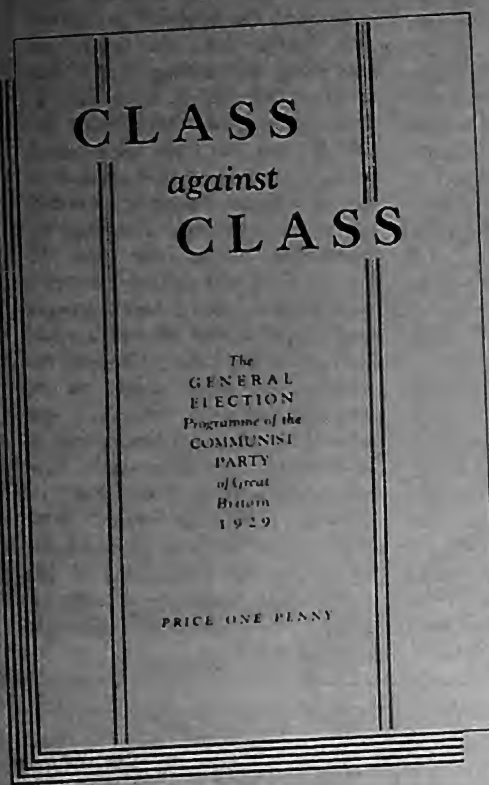


## What you can do

IF YOU want to assist the fight against the barbaric prison system in Turkey and help free the class war prisoners still incarcerated there are several ways to help. You or an organisation which you belong to can affiliate to the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey. You can take copies of the CDDRT's *Turkey Newsletter* to distribute to friends and comrades in your workplace, trade union, or Party branch. You can invite a speaker from the CDDRT to explain the current situation in Turkey and the struggle for genuine democracy. If you want to join the CDDRT, certainly if you want to help establish a local branch of the CDDRT in your area, contact the CDDRT at: 129 Newington Green Road, London N1. Tel: 01-226 2668.



## Third Volume



Noreen Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941* Lawrence and Wishart, London 1985. pp. 350, £6.95.

STUDENTS OF our Party's history have waited 16 years for this book. It may be that the author of the previous volumes of the Party history was correct when he said that "the period from 1927 to ... around 1932 (was)... a complex and difficult period ... of the history of the Communist Party in particular." (James Klugmann *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1925-1927* p. 10)

Many communists welcomed the right-moving centrism that was popular frontism after the sectarian 'Class-against-Class' period in the world communist movement. Comrade Branson's book covers both periods; and if there are questions in other minds as to whether the different lines were related to the requirements of Soviet foreign policy at different times, there are none in hers. 'Class against Class' was initiated simply because "a line of extreme sectarianism is one to which Marxists have been prone ever since Karl Marx himself fought against it" (p. 29). And mysteriously she wonders: "whose influence within that body (Comintern — PB) was primarily responsible for its introduction remains obscure" (p. 29).

In a drift away from Leninist practice after Lenin's death, Comintern was moving towards accepting that further revolutions were not to be in the near future, and therefore that (incorrectly) everything in the world communist movement had to be exerted solely to preserve the Soviet Union. Certainly the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was experiencing severe problems resulting from the heady rush towards industrialisation during the first Five Year Plan. And it is not inconceivable that its requirements were foremost in the decision of Comintern to institute the 'Class against Class' period.

Whilst social democracy often puts on a 'pacific' face (such as the Labour Party at the last general election), the experience of social democracy in practice gives the lie to this. German social democracy's active counterrevolutionary role in the defeat of the early '20s German revolution and the British Labour Party's anti-Soviet stance were clear examples that Comintern could draw on. But this was not new. Ever since the foundation of Comintern the dual nature of social democracy had been understood: its bourgeois politics, its proletarian base. But 'Class against Class' as practised by Comintern under the leadership of Stalin meant the divorce of communists from the social democratic rank and file. It enabled the social democrat leaders to blinker their memberships and hide their own natures, since all members of social democrat parties were consigned to the unspeakable status of

'social fascists', the inevitable midwives of fascism proper.

The establishment of fascism in Germany was a bell of alarming proportions. Its ringing panicked the leadership to do a U-turn which was formally confirmed at the Seventh and final Congress of Comintern in 1935. Popular frontism was to be the new line, and one that while very popular with Harry Pollitt at the time, the author of *Fascism and the Social Revolution*, the solidly loyal Comintern man Palme Dutt, did not so whole heartedly welcome the change in line. And it is interesting to note that the next time there was major disagreement between the two, in 1939, it was this time a case of Dutt putting the Comintern line and of Pollitt opposing it from the right.

The popular front was presented as another form of united front, only this time 'against fascism'. Any anti-fascist, real or imagined, could belong to this 'united front'. So rather than rally the world's workers against the cause of the fascist cancer — the decaying capitalist system, communist parties strove for alliances with anybody and everybody willing to 'oppose' fascism in word or deed. Either side with the non-fascist democratic imperialist powers or face destruction. That was the stark choice Comintern's centrist vision encompassed. The popular front was the counterpart and it might be said adjunct of the Soviet state aim. The trouble was that it was also class collaboration made acceptable from the best of (centrist) intentions.

Raw recruits to the CPGB in the popular front period were under less and less obligation to the Party: "Party leaders stressed the need to avoid putting pressure on new recruits" (p. 191). And despite the emphasis on anti-fascism at this time, comrade Branson conveniently omits to mention that the Party was initially reluctant to take on the fascists at Cable Street. Surely no small matter.

Party potential was lost in a succession of events which must have left most members a little punch drunk. After supporting the British imperialist declaration of war on Germany in 1939 as a logical extension of the popular front line, once the Comintern position of opposition to the war as imperialist and predatory on both sides all but Pollitt and Campbell were convinced by Dutt's advocacy. With the Soviet-German non-aggression pact just concluded alliances with the bourgeois democracies was a dead letter. Pollitt left the Party's general secretaryship for the interregnum.

Formal correctness is one thing, how you actually apply your line another. Revolutionary defeatism in time of imperialist war was the correct line, but in fact the Party did little more than simply mark time until the line changed to support for the war after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Although the *Daily Worker* was banned the Party was not: that is how much of a threat the British bourgeoisie considered it; 'marking time' seems quite fitting in such circumstances as a description. But then little of these questions come the way of the reader of this book; comrade Branson has not acquitted herself well nor done our Party much good in this work.

Peter Butler

## Armed 'n' Ready

Andrew Rothstein, *The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919*. Journeyman 1985, pp.116, £3.95.

ANYTHING by a founder member of our Party is of interest to communists. That this book provides invaluable information on one facet of the struggles that gave birth to the Party enhances that interest.

The soldiers' strikes took place in an atmosphere of rising militancy and discontent amongst the working class, both in and out of uniform after World War I. January 1919 specifically. They were a culmination of the grievances held by those workers still in uniform two months after the end of the war. Anger was felt at the slow rate of demobilisation, provoking suspicions concerning the government's preparations

for war against the young Soviet Republic. Complaints arose over abuse from officers, poor conditions, worse pay, and the like.

The first incidence of this latent anger transforming into action occurred on 4 January in Folkestone when Scots, Irish, and Welsh Guards refused to embark for France. Seven thousand men, rifles and all, marched on the town hall where a 'soldiers' union' was formed to negotiate with the civil and military authorities. At Dover the same day similar events occurred with Australian and Canadian troops.

Action quickly spread across the country and to men stationed overseas. The soldiers gave voice to their demands through elected councils, and organised occupations of buildings, refusal to obey orders, marches, and demonstrations until demands were met or assurance given.

The extent of these actions was to say the least extensive. They were not isolated events but the burgeoning of anger amongst a whole armed section of the working class.

It would be naive, however to assume that these soldiers had spontaneously developed a desire to protect and emulate Soviet Russia. In general the attitude of the soldiers to intervention was derived from an (understandable) reluctance to occupy the same space at the same time as a Red Guard's bullet, rather than any great affinity for Bolshevism. War-weariness and disgust at the government's machinations provided the primary motivation for British soldiers.

Revolutionaries, though, did not have a totally negligible effect on the outbursts. The propaganda of groups such as the Socialist Labour Party, the British Socialist Party, and others had a telling effect in certain quarters. The interventions of the young Andrew Rothstein, then a member of the BSP in the Royal Engineers, were instrumental in the lack of volunteers (one only) to go to Russia. In Milford Haven on 13 January sailors on HMS Kilbride refused to put to sea for the pay they received, and asked to see the captain. This was refused. The men were intransigent and the captain, despairing, left the ship. The sailors lowered the ship's union jack and raised the Red Flag. This resulted in the courtmartial of seven men. In France the soldiers' councils joined with the women nurses in the presentation of their demands, one of which was to be allowed to attend the 'Hands off Russia' demonstration in London in February.

The central demands of the soldiers were conceded — demobilisation was speeded up and troops were sent to Archangel on a voluntary basis only. Needless to say few volunteered.

The soldiers' strikes by rendering impossible the mobilisation of a large intervention force immeasurably aided the Soviet Republic. The inability of revolutionaries to make a great impact in this struggle and to carry it forward was symptomatic of the lack of a Communist Party. Great possibilities presented themselves to comrade Rothstein and his contemporaries which because of the lack of a Party they were unable to fully realise.

Organisation within the armed forces was given high priority in Lenin's Comintern as condition four of the terms of admission shows:

"Persistent and systematic propaganda and agitation must be conducted in the armed forces and Communist cells formed in every military unit. In the main Communists will have to do this work illegally; failure to engage in it would be tantamount to a betrayal of their revolutionary duty and incompatible with membership of the Third International." When these words were written comrade Rothstein certainly agreed with them. Now that he is backing the liquidationist *Morning Star* rebellion it is worth asking him whether or not his faction could agree with it or any of the other 20 terms? We think not.

Alan Merrick

## Leninism

Marcel Liebman, *Leninism under Lenin*. Merlin, London 1980, pp. 477, £4.50

IT COULD well be said that over sixty years after his death, Lenin and the Party he built

have come to mean all things to all men. The multifarious array of 'Leninist groups' bears this out. Liebman's book thankfully assists in the clarification of what Leninism is and what it isn't, and in doing so shatters many myths.

Liebman encapsulates Lenin's cardinal achievement when he states: "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Lenin's chief contribution to the political reality of our time was his creation of the Bolshevik Party, of a tool to make revolutions with — indeed the tool for making revolutions."

With the NCP's pathetic attempt at party building behind us, and grandiose declarations from the Chater camp hailing the *Morning Star* as a latter-day *Iskra*, it would be productive to take a glance back at the genuine article. Prior to *Iskra* Russian revolutionary groups had been characterised by their amateurishness. Lenin's aim was to overcome this with a paper that would unite and train revolutionaries. As Lenin said: "we must have as our immediate aim the founding of a Party organ that will appear regularly, and be closely connected with all the local groups."

*Iskra* played the role of informer, propagandist, and organiser of Russian revolutionaries in the early 1900s. Its style was heavily polemical, written for politically advanced workers, its polemic directed primarily against economism, which sought to limit workers struggles to the purely trade union plane. (A signed photo of Tony Chater to anyone who can find a paper more soaked in economic ideology than the *Morning Star*.)

The only place the *Star* will take communists is into the Labour Party. Our fight must be in the CPGB, or not at all. Therefore in light of comrade Nina Temple's appeals (?) for a 'tolerant' Party it is interesting to compare Lenin's concept of Party democracy to that of many Euros.

The Bolsheviks were for much of the time before the October revolution forced to organise in a clandestine, highly centralised fashion, which by necessity afforded little inner-Party democracy. However, when objective conditions allowed, Party democracy was exercised to the full. In 1905 Lenin described the situation in the Party at that time: "The St Petersburg worker Social-Democrats know that the whole Party organisation is now built on a democratic basis. This means that all Party members take part in the election of officials, committee members, and so forth, that all the Party members discuss and decide questions concerning the political campaign of the proletariat, and that all Party members determine the line of tactics of the Party organisations." Can the same truly be said of our Party today?

On democratic centralism, Lenin wrote that it "implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of definite action," and "In the heat of battle, when the proletarian army is straining every nerve, no criticism whatever can be permitted in its ranks. But before the call for action is issued there should be the broadest and freest discussion and appraisal of the resolution, of its arguments, and its various propositions." (Our emphasis-AM).

The degree of inner-Party democracy was to be tested many times by many people, including Lenin himself. On returning from exile despite being in an extreme minority on the need for a revolution against the Provisional government he was able to express this idea in the *April Theses* to a wide range of Party members, and go on to win the majority. During 1917 absolute discipline, imposed by necessity since 1908, faded away and the right of tendencies to organise, in theory present in the Party rules since 1905, became reality.

In the Bolsheviks' national conference in April 1917 Lenin spoke in favour of the presence of Kamenev, a leader of the Party's rightwing, on the Central Committee. Both Kamenev and Zinoviev, leading oppositionists, were Politburo members. How different this seems from today's CPGB, with not even one ineffectual oppositionist on the EC.

The extensive Party democracy and 'opening of the floodgates' to workers after February 1917 gave rise to the interpenetration of Party and class which proved so effective in October.

The immediate result of the October Revolution was, according to Liebman, an



expansion in inner-Party and State democratisation never before experienced. "... The role played by the Central Committee was crucial. In the course of endless discussions, through passionate debates in which tendencies opposed each other without the least beating about the bush, and in which majorities were made and unmade in accordance with the weight of arguments brought forward and in an atmosphere of complete freedom ... the Congresses of the Communist Party continued to live up to the best traditions of the socialist movement. There was open and free criticism of the Party leadership, including Lenin himself, delegates challenged each other fiercely ..."

Organised tendencies, now a taboo subject amongst Euro and oppositionalists alike, was not so in Lenin's Party. Groups such as the Left Communist, Democratic Centralists, and the Workers' Opposition existed openly within the Bolsheviks' ranks. Liebman shows these tendencies existing at every level of the Party: "Representation of tendencies was regarded as normal not only in the Party Congress but also in the Central Committee ..." The Workers' Opposition had its platform published in *Pravda*, and the Party printed 250,000 copies of a pamphlet



by one of that group's leaders, Alexandra Kollontai. Can you imagine Farleigh Press, owned by the CPGB, printing *The Leninist*? Only at the Tenth Party Congress were factions proscribed, and Lenin's closing remarks indicate that this was but a temporary measure — "Comrades, let us not have an opposition just now."

Lenin's Party was one of infinite flexibility and, when it could be, flourishing democracy. The failures, mistakes, and even distortions since then have given rise to the present sad state of our movement. The Party leadership bureaucratically manipulates its membership often now expelling and deviously gerrymandering to achieve its ends. The Chatterites treat the *Star* as a piece of personal property, limiting the number of sectional meetings of the PPPS AGM (amongst other acts) to ensure it stays that way.

Marcel Liebman's book illustrates what can be achieved by principled revolutionaries organised in a Leninist Party. We shall continue the fight for such a Party.

Alan Merrik

## Flawed and floored

Carol Brickley, Terry O'Halloran, David Reed, *South Africa — Britain out of Apartheid — Apartheid out of Britain* Larkin publications, £0.95.

The main point of this pamphlet by the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) is

to explain and justify their activities within the Anti-Apartheid Movement, especially those of the City AAM branch, rather than offering an analysis of the foundations of the Apartheid State and the liberation struggle or practical strategy for building solidarity with the revolutionary struggle in South Africa. In short, it is a polemic against the leadership of the AAM.

Despite that, the authors do effectively describe what we would term the regional imperialist role the Apartheid state plays in southern Africa, particularly its aggressive diplomatic manoeuvres and its savage military operations against the frontline states of Mozambique, Angola and the illegally occupied Namibia. Likewise they briefly describe the lucrative economic stake the profit-hungry US and British transnationals have in manufacturing and mines, plus a resumé of the swelling movement of mass struggle against Botha's racist regime.

But typically, in true tailist fashion, the RCG avoid delving into the differences in strategy between the main liberation force, the ANC (African National Congress), the smaller black consciousness AZAPO (Azanian Peoples Organisation) and the remnants of the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress). Whilst the authors have not seen fit to discuss the various orientations of the oppositions they also, having some time ago broken off their flirtation with the world communist movement, deliberately avoid mentioning either the South African Communist Party or the fact that it is the Soviet Union and other socialist countries that provide the limpet mines, guns, and grenades for the ANC's armed wing — Umkhonto we Sizwe. Such omissions are not due to ignorance, of course. They result from the RCG's sectarian dismissal of not only most communist parties but from their whole perspective of building a communist party in Britain based simply on sections of the most oppressed: blacks, women, the Irish etc., and on anti-imperialist propaganda and campaign. They thus choose to ignore those anti-imperialist traditions that do exist in the CPGB. For them the skilled white working class constitutes a labour aristocracy who have an actual stake in British imperialism. They thus dismiss actively working within the trade union movement to promote their anti-imperialist campaigns, preferring to operate within existing anti-imperialist organisations or setting up their own (e.g. the Irish Solidarity Movement). With the solidarity movement with the struggle in South Africa they took, initially, the former course.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) has been in existence for some 26 years, and according to the authors, who contrast its record with the recently formed and apparently more successful Free South Africa Movement in the USA, it has failed to become a mass movement against Apartheid. This they blame on the AAM continually placing its faith on lobbying Labour politicians and Labour governments. Of course, Labour politicians are adept at making rousing speeches, anti-Apartheid noises whilst in opposition but when in government they have pursued both racist immigration policies and failed to impose more than token sanctions or embargoes against South Africa. In fact the last two Labour administrations had used a Security Council veto to prevent such action against Apartheid some four times in all. Other good illustrations given of the hollowness of Labour leaders' claims to be opposed to Apartheid are the government's support for Marconi exporting a major communications system to the South African Armaments Board and its refusal to direct British Leyland to recognise black workers unions, both in 1976. But while rightly slamming Labour's record, they throw the baby out with the bathwater, and attack the AAM for "continuing to place its faith in persuading the organised Labour and trade union movement to act against the apartheid regime." (p. 30) By this sectarian attitude towards both the Labour Party and the labour and trade union movement, they in effect propose either the isolation of the working class movement from the solidarity struggle or that some sections of the labour movement may be "drawn in (the) wake" of the unemployed, blacks and Irish on the anti-Apartheid issue.

The RCG decided to move into the AAM

in a 'big way' when they set up the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group in February 1982. There can be no doubt that this group was very active and vociferous in campaigning for the release of David Kitson, mounting a non-stop picket outside the South African embassy for 86 days in 1982, and embarking on a number of other pickets, occupations, and meetings in the ensuing period. Such direct action methods appeared to ruffle the feathers of some of the leading figures in the AAM, partly because it contrasted with the relative inertia that had built up in some AAM groups and also because the RCG did not disguise its disdain for working in the channels of the trade union and labour movement. Though the work of the City group was quite rightly in many ways genuinely admired by many ordinary AAM members, their arrogance added to their contempt for the labour movement made them an easy target for the AAM leadership and they duly expelled the City group at the AAM AGM in September 1984.

There can be no better illustration of the RCG's fundamentally flawed politics than its comment that it was the rightward moving "... British labour movement which successfully collaborated in the defeat of the striking miners." (p. 47) Seemingly incapable of distinguishing between the open betrayal of Judas Willis and Ramsay McKinnock, the mealy-mouthed prevarication and pretence of Todd and Knapp and the intransigence of Arthur Scargill and Jack Collins, not to mention thousands of miners (in their view part of the labour aristocracy!) and miners' supporters within the "British labour movement", the RCG exposes its shallow 'middle class left' liberalism and its basic inability to build either a communist party or real mass solidarity anti-imperialist movements in Britain.

Brian Murphy

## Noble Platitudes



Kate Marshall, *Moral panics and Victorian values*, Junius Publications, London 1985, pp 58, £1.50

THIS pamphlet is worth reading as a useful handbook to the Tories' recent attacks on women and the family. Marshall competently, and sometimes even wittily, lists and explains the reasoning behind the rediscovery of Victorian morality:

"One symptom of Britain's decline as a major power is the establishment's desperate drive to revive a morality it calls Victorian ... The chief merit of the revival of Victorian values is that it turns hypocrisy into a virtue and endows prejudice with the status of common sense." (p. 1). Marshall's analysis, such as it is, is free from the bigotry so often found on the left in one guise or another and her stated aim of her organisation (the RCP) is loyal to the orthodoxy Engels established:

"We aim to do away with the economic role

of the family to allow the full development of emotional attachments between individuals. Far from seeking to separate sex and love, communists want to destroy the economic interests of a system which stands between sex and love." (p. 56).

Very noble sentiment, but the problem with this pamphlet is that, given the RCP's congenital sectarianism, they can give no realistic programme for defending women's rights apart from 'come and join us'. The pamphlet and their paper *Ins* are littered with good intentions and platitudes as to how women can achieve their liberation. *Ins* has carried numerous articles on the subject of reproductive rights yet the nearest we can get to a suggestion of what women should actually do is in *Ins* of April 26 1985 when Kate Marshall ends an article on the subject thus:

"The only effective response to Warnock, Powell and the whole debate is to fight for women's right to contraception and free abortion on demand, to free them from the tyranny of family life."

So profound is this conclusion that it appears word for word in *Moral Panics ...* (p. 44).

Such platitudes are the logic of the RCP's politics which run something like this: nothing is worth doing unless the RCP does it; nothing is worth being involved in unless the RCP controls it; no organisation is worth working in unless the RCP leads it; and all communist history is more or less irrelevant until the RCP came into existence. In short the RCP are classic sectarians. This sectarianism was nowhere better illustrated than during the miners' strike. Instead of viewing and promoting the movement of pit women as a highly positive development which could show the way forward to a working class women's movement, the RCP consistently pointed to the negative features the women came up against such as obstructive officials. This is not to deny that these sort of obstructions did occur but it was hardly the main point to come out of this movement. Only the RCP seemed to think so. Moreover, given that prejudice does exist among workers, how do the RCP propose to combat it? A working class women's movement could provide a real and effective counter to the ingrained prejudice of their class brothers; but the truth is that the RCP does not want to see a working class women's movement unless it is controlled by them. They can only disparage or denounce that which is born of struggle because it is not pure, because it is born of grubby reality with all its problems.

The RCP is slick in packaging its politics and no one should criticise them for that. The problem is that there under the packaging there is too little substance. Like a bubble they are pure and bright but without real content. Their type of politics is good at attracting young radical students but it will not win working class women because, although this pamphlet explains their problems, the RCP cannot provide an answer to their dilemma. Stunts are fun, the RCP is fun, party party all the way, but it provides no answer, no strategy, no method to working class women or to the working class as a whole.

Their politics are based on stuntism, of gaining maximum publicity, and therefore issues are picked up and put down at whim. Hands up who remembers 'Women for Communism', this was the RCP's women's movement but like ELWAR it was shelved when the emphasis was put elsewhere. This is not the way for communists to build a genuine mass movement, to be effective we need to gain the confidence of the workers and to do that communists must be consistent. To us an excellent example of communists leading a mass movement was the Communist Party's leadership of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the 1920's and 30's when communists were able to gain widespread respect and trust from the working class. The RCP has a dilettante approach to these questions which may win them their much sought after publicity but which fosters distrust amongst the workers.

To conclude, by all means read Marshall's pamphlet, it is full of useful information, but if you want to know how to fight, if you want a strategy to win the liberation of women and the class in general — read *The Leninist*.

Geraldine Duffy



## The Iran/Iraq War

# No Proxy War

machinations. One explicit exposition of this 'conspiracy theory' of war came in *World Marxist Review* of July 1983. Apparently "border disputes" like the Iran/Iraq conflagration "do not necessarily have to lead to war and can be settled peacefully. If they grow into hostilities, it is the result of the hegemonistic politics of reactionary regimes and also of the manipulations and provocations by an imperialist state, usually a former colonial power or the USA..."

"...when a serious conflict flares up in some region it is invariably found that it is the handiwork of imperialist forces..."

By not recognising that Iran and Iraq are medium level developed capitalist countries where monopolies have formed and consequently indigenous finance capital centres, a conflict like the Iran/Iraq carnage can be seen as simply 'irrational' or the result of the plots of dark imperialist forces. In point of fact, Iran and Iraq are fighting the war for their own interests as capitalist countries, not simply as undeveloped agents for world imperialism. Indeed if Iraq is a proxy for anyone, it can only be the USSR which for years supplied large quantities of advanced weaponry.

Anyway since 1969, Iran adopted with full encouragement from the USA an avowedly policeman-like stance to all the states bordering the Gulf. The Shah even proclaimed that Bahrain was in fact a part of Iran as were parts of UAE. In 1971, after Britain withdrew its forces from the Gulf, Iran put its rhetoric into action as it seized three small islands formerly part of UAE. Given their strategic location in the Straits of Hormuz at the eastern entrance to the Gulf, the Shah claimed these islands were essential to "protect the Gulf from subversive forces."

After the 1978-79 Iranian 'Islamic revolution', the new regime under the clerical reactionary Khomeini continued the rhetoric of Iranian expansionism. However, the emphasis had changed from the Shah's time. Now the religious aspect of the Iranian revolution was promoted and the new regime in Tehran constantly threatened to unleash internal Shi'a rebellions against the "godless" and "corrupt" Gulf states. With their grotesquely imbalanced population compositions and sharp religious divides, this posed a real threat to these countries.

Thus when the Shah in April 1969 unilaterally renounced the 1937 agreement between the two countries on the Shaat al-Arab waterway that forms the boundary between them for some 60 miles from the head of the Gulf, for the next six years he set about supplying Kurdish nationalists fighting the Iraq regime with large amounts of weapons.

Similarly, when Khomeini came to power, he began cynically inciting the Shi'a population (55%) in Iraq to 'Islamic revolution'. A Shi'a 'revolution' in Iraq (as our map makes clear) could have potentially cut Iraq off from its economic lifeline to the outside world — the Shaat al-Arab waterway. Under the lash of a similar imperialist drive Saddam Hussein of Iraq attempted to subvert the new regime in Iran in order to seize Iran's oilfields. In September 1980 Hussein declared the agreement of 1975 on the Shaat al-Arab waterway to be dead, demanded the return of the annexed UAE islands, dubbed Iraq the 'Defender of the Gulf' against the Iranian threat (this claim was greeted with more than a degree of scepticism in other Gulf states, for example Iraq has never actually accepted the right of Kuwait to even exist!), and called for autonomy for Iran's Arabs — who inhabit the main oil rich areas. By September 1980, Hussein felt he could advance Iraq's imperialist ambitions through

the invasion of Iran which was greatly weakened by the turmoil of 'Islamic revolution'. Thus began the bloody slaughter of the past six years.

### Technical View

The fact that the Iraq regime invaded *first* led both the Communist Party of Iraq and our Iranian Tudeh comrades to initially support the "legitimate war of defence" of the Iranian regime. Many groups still take this *technical* view of the nature of the conflict and consequently end up with a totally unMarxist position. One of the most explicit expressions of this view of the war was given by Helen Ward in *Workers Power* of July 4 1984:

"Iran's tenacious resistance, with revolutionary guards and volunteers mobilised in massive numbers, checked the Iraqi advance. By 1982 Iran had turned the tide against Iraq and the character of the war changed from being a legitimate one of defence by Iran, to being a thoroughly reactionary war on both sides."

Our view of the 'legitimacy' of the war is not determined by which side attacked *first*, but by the nature of the classes waging the war. Consequently, we have no hesitation in stating that at *no stage* in the war did either side have 'legitimacy' as far as the working masses are concerned. As we have pointed out, Khomeini's religious rhetoric is a cover for the continuation of the same expansionist policies as the Shah. What we are confronted by is two far from underdeveloped capitalist countries, led by reactionaries, slugging out a war upon which rests the fragile regional order in the Gulf. Faced with this there should be only one option for revolutionaries. Not 'conditional support' for either regime, or condemnation of the 'first' to attack; but *revolutionary defeatism* from the first day of the war. Anything else

### FIGHTING POWER

#### IRAQ



#### IRAN



	IRAQ	IRAN
ARMY PERSONNEL	575,000	700,000 (including Bascej and 150,000 Revolutionary Guards)
TANKS	2,360	940*
COMBAT AIRCRAFT	330	200*
NAVY PERSONNEL	4,200	20,000

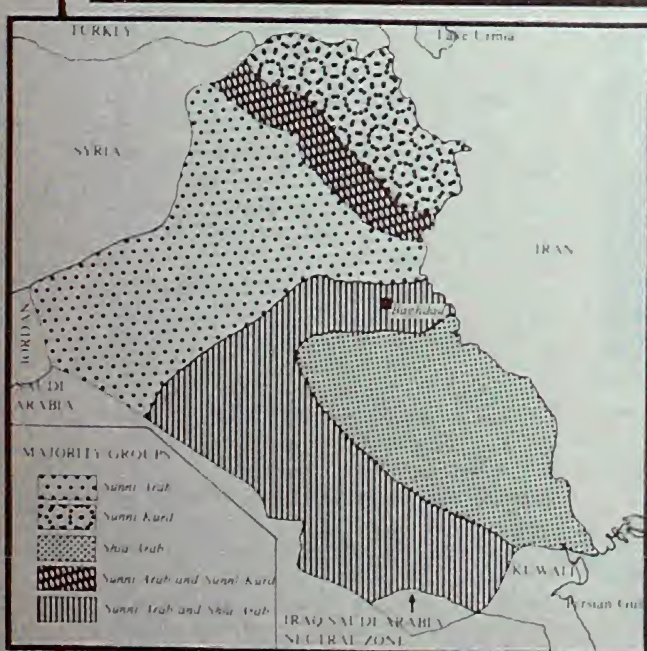
\* Shortage of spares for tanks and about 80 aircraft combat worthy

Source: The Military Balance 1983/4 International Institute of Strategic Studies

would be to betray the masses who have suffered for so long under a succession of brutal reactionary rulers.

- DOWN WITH KHOMEINI AND HUSSEIN!
- USE THE DISRUPTION AND DISAFFECTION OF THE WAR TO BRING DOWN BOTH REGIMES!
- FOR REVOLUTIONARY UNITY BETWEEN THE WORKING CLASSES AND TOILING MASSES OF IRAN AND IRAQ!

Alec Long



Khomeini eyeing Iraq's Shi'a areas. Now religious rhetoric about bringing down the 'godless' is used to promote Iranian expansionism.

THE bland statistics of the Iran/Iraq bloodbath are simply breathtaking: economic losses to the two sides now total hundreds of billions of dollars and US military specialists estimated that by mid-February 1984, just before a particularly bloody phase of the war, Iran had suffered some 180,000 fatalities and Iraq 65,000. Iran has responded to Iraq's technical superiority and 'dig in' tactics by throwing wave after human wave of

soldiers, some as young as 11 and roped together to prevent them from deserting, against the entrenched positions of the Iraqis. Significantly many have dismissed this awesome conflict as simply 'irrational' or the product of personality clashes. It is important however to understand the real causes of this war; at stake is not simply the fragile and unstable regional order, but also possibly the area could play the role in today's world of the pre-1914 Balkans. It

could be the flash point for World War Three.

### Consensus

There is a common consensus held by many in the world communist movement through to sections of the left reformist and Trotskyite milieu, that presents the war between Iran and Iraq as essentially 'irrational', an egotistical conflict between two stubborn men or more often the terrible result of imperialist